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1928

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THE BEST EUROPEAN SHORT STORIES OF 1928

Edited by
RICHARD EATON



DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY
NEW YORK - - - 1929

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PREFACE

THE Best European Short Stories is the only annual Baedeker to current European literature. Its destiny is to give in a few hundred pages of short stories a summary of the literary activity of Continental Europe in 1928 and to permit its readers to taste of the best of contemporary European writers. Are short stories, however, sufficiently characteristic of Continental literature to justify this pretension?

The perfection of the art of the short story in Europe has been the only *relief* in the blank melancholy of Post-War literature. A retrospective view of Continental literature in 1928 reveals a marked change in its habitual degeneracy and in the sharp differences found in the literary development of each country. Two years ago, in the preface to the Best French Short Stories, I spoke of the increased interest in the short story in France. Today, not only in France but throughout Europe, the short story has attained a place of dominance in the intellectual world. If there is little hope of a political United States of Europe her literary tastes have at least achieved a union whose basis is the short story.

Throughout the Continent, there has arisen a popular taste for *good* short stories. There is not only a *Candide* in France and a *Nouvelles Littéraires*

but *Gringoire* and several lesser publications. Germany, Belgium, Poland, Italy, Czechoslovakia have each one or several literary weeklies exceedingly prosperous and usually subsidized by a publishing firm which offer a retribution to the author of talent permitting him to devote his genius to the creation of short stories of merit certain of appreciation by an interested public and a genial publisher.

Previous to the creation of the literary weeklies, the author could only hope for success from a book, the product of six months' toil, success which more frequently was transformed into an ignominious defeat for author and publisher alike. In order to live, the author, and even the most famous, was obliged to accept a journalistic employ which tended rather to extenuate the success which he might hope to achieve some day through his more carefully conceived work.

The literary weeklies whose success has been the cause of the development of the short story seem strange sheets and judging by Anglo-Saxon standards completely inadequate. They are almost without exception published in the form of a daily newspaper and their make-up is very similar. Six or twelve pages suffice for the weekly intellectual ration of their readers and spicy political or literary gossip and essays fill the columns which are not taken by the short stories—two or three at the most—the *pièces de résistance* of the week or by the copious literary and commercial advertising. The literary weeklies have high standards

and their editorial policy is much as if one of our popular fiction weeklies were to be placed under the editorial direction of the *Dial* or *Atlantic Monthly*. They enjoy a widespread circulation, a proof of their popularity. *Candide*, for instance, in France, a country of only forty millions, has a circulation of half a million weekly.

The collection of Best Short Stories which is presented in this volume is, of course, a courageous title to assume. In making my choice, I have endeavoured with the aid of many colleagues to include stories which are particularly characteristic of the literary development of each country. If some do not conform to the standards of the American short story, I must ask my readers to remember the story of the Council of Ambassadors in Petrograd, convoked to protest against the arrest of the Greek minister shortly after the outbreak of the Bolshevik revolution. Lenin, accused of having betrayed the Slav cause by the Serbian minister, replied, "From your point of view you are quite right. I have betrayed not only the Allied cause but that of the Slavs. That is your point of view, but we Bolsheviks have another point of view and we do not recognize the existence of any cause except our own."

And the short story likewise must be judged by a "point of view," that of comparison with the national literary activity.

RICHARD EATON

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THE BEST
EUROPEAN SHORT STORIES
OF 1928

A WINTER NIGHT

By HANS AANRUD

(Norwegian)

THE moon hung thin and crescent some distance above the forest sky line in the east, and threw a sickly yellowish sheen over the snow-decked valley; it just managed to spread over the eastern sky a subdued light and no more. Toward the north and west the stars glittered against the blue background, and their shimmering light flickered and sparkled over the cold snow and the feathery rime-fringes in the trees. Toward the south the sides of the valley crept close together and shut out the moonlight completely; it was out yonder, one might well surmise, that the very darkness had its beginning. Towards the north the valley spread out again into a sandy spruce-forested plain, and far above it—far, far away where the sides of the valley again crept together—a north star flickered faintly. Out of the southern darkness came the highway, winding itself past hill and mountain, it too a glittering white, recognizable only by the blue shadows cast by the high snow-banked walls. Suddenly it swung far out to get past a hill which thrust itself out farther than the rest, sloping straight down to the river, passed by a farm gate, whence a still narrower

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bypath crept up obliquely and turned off into a clump of trees, swung in again for a considerable stretch, suddenly made a beeline for the spruce plain, and disappeared through a little dark gap into the forest.

In the homes on either side of the valley could be seen lights in the windows, usually in two windows in each case, each house thus, as it were, looking out over the valley with two eyes, more often than not reddish uncertain flickering lights—coming no doubt from the fires on the ingles.

In the house on the hillside above the gate, farther forward than the others, there was a light in only one window—a steady white light.

It was quite still; not the slightest breath of air; not a sound; only now and then a short sharp report, as the ice cracked in the biting cold, or a muffled boom, as a door on one of the farms slammed shut.

In the stillness could be heard a creaking, scarcely audible, in the little grove of trees, whence the narrow path issued forth, a steady measured creaking as of footsteps. It served only to magnify the stillness. Everything, as it were, seemed to be listening to catch each sound—the only sound of life. It increased, grew louder, sounded unmistakably like footsteps; and this sound, the only sound abroad, seemed to fill the whole valley.

From the grove of trees emerged a giant shadow weaving back and forth over the shining snow. All at once it came to a stop; the sounds ceased, and a

man could be made out pausing a moment on the very border line between the shadow cast by the forest and the pale light of the moon. It was only for a moment that he paused, as he looked about, his head bent over. Then he stepped forward again; it appeared almost as if he shuddered the moment he heard the creaking underneath his foot. He hurried on, but his pace was no longer measured; there was something faltering, something uncertain, in his gait, as if something pained him every time he put his foot down. He swerved close to one of the gate-posts, and turned his head quickly to both sides, as he ventured the last hesitant step and emerged on the highway. Again he glanced to either side, his head bent down, crossed the road to the outer edge, and peered over. There was a sheer drop from the projecting hillside on either side straight down to the river, which ran through the ravine below, and the abyss was dark beneath him.

He looked down. Directly below he made out a huge dark pit. The rapids had not entirely frozen over, and up from the depths rose faint plaintive-sounding gurgles. He paused thus a moment, then bent over, placing his hands in the snow on the outermost stone to brace himself, and cocked his ear as if to listen. He leaned farther and farther over; there seemed to be something drawing him on.

Suddenly he gave a thrust with both hands and landed on the upper side of the highway, threw his

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head back, and stood erect, a tall, slender, resilient figure. The light fell on his beardless, sharply featured face.

It was terribly pale.

One moment he stood thus, then as suddenly roused himself and shuddered as he pressed his arm against his body and felt something underneath his coat. Then he turned his face upward, as if in defiance, and started hurriedly up the road northward.

The moon had risen higher and had dimmed the uncertain and fitful light of the stars. These stars seemed now but quiet, pale points of light in the bright sky, and the lone star in the north was no more than visible over the distant hilltops, a faint, flickering band of light.

His shadow had now become definite. At first it lengthened and shortened against the high embankments of snow along the road as he swung around the turn. Then, when the highway made straight for the moor, it preceded him evenly, with just a little jerk at every step he took.

The man still continued to hold his head high. His steps grew faster and faster; he all but ran over the level highway. His eye was glued to the dark opening where the highway led into the forest. It grew larger and larger as he proceeded, and unconsciously his steps increased. Then all of a sudden he had reached it, his shadow disappeared, he leaned forward again, paused, and listened intently.

Not a sound. Only the deep echo of a hound bay-ing far away.

He started walking again, but there was something of alert anxiety in his gait.

There was in the forest a peculiar blend of darkness and light, alternating, confusing, murky chasms under-neath the frost-decked firs, elongated dark shadows stretching across the road, and then of a sudden a glit-tering moonbeam. The same over and over again the length of the long flat moor, across which the road cut its narrow way on and on as if there were no end to it.

Here and there a snow fringe dislodged itself from a branch, and gathering others as it fell drifted down like cold blinking flakes, and set the quiet light aquiver.

Then unconsciously he paused, his foot half raised, held his breath, and looked about.

But there was no sign of life visible. Only the sus-picious track of a fox that had doggedly held to the road and crossed it several times.

But after such a pause he stepped off even more warily than before, as though he were afraid lest the creaking underfoot set the whole forest adrizzling.

He walked and walked interminably.

Then suddenly the highway swung to one side, a light opening appeared, and the moor had come to an end.

He paused and leaned forward to listen again. No. He straightened up and looked around. He re-

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mained thus for some time. Then suddenly a shudder ran through him. He bent forward again and listened.

The faint cracked tinkle of a frozen bell reached the forest intermittently. The sounds came fitfully as from some one driving slowly.

He stood still and listened. The tinkle grew louder and less fitful; the driver had gone over into a trot.

He turned about and walked slowly back over the moor.

Around the turn in the road and across the short stretch in front of the moor appeared a little shaggy horse, bobbing up and down in a slow trot, and swaying loosely in the thills. Down over his eyes hung a crop of shaggy mane, and his mouth and hairy sides were covered with frost. All around him was a cloud of steam. Every time he haltingly set his forefeet down, the tiny bell attached to the collar gave a few faint tinkles, dull and frozen.

He was hitched to a long sleigh loaded with city wares. The steel runners whined and sent the sparks flying at every jerk.

On the forepart of the load sat a man, a horse blanket wrapped about his feet, his cap pulled down over his ears. He swayed back and forth, his head dangling loosely forward, his full rime-frosted beard pressed tightly in against his coat. One might have thought he was asleep, but now and again he gave the

loose reins a jerk, and stuck his mittened hands in turn underneath his coat.

They proceeded slowly over the plain, slackened their pace little by little, and went into a walk as the road entered the forest.

The man looked up, gave a jerk as if to pull up, but bethought himself, and his head fell forward again.

Thus they continued for a long time over the moor.

Suddenly the driver looked up—the horse had come to a stop.

He brushed his cap back, ran his mittens over his frosty eyebrows, and fixed a pair of innocent blue eyes on a man forced up against the edge of the road.

The horse too stood with his head bent over to the side of the man.

It was quite still for a moment. No one stirred.

“Is it you, Even?” the man on the sleigh finally asked.

He did not answer.

“But isn’t it you, Even?”

“Yes.”

The answer sounded hesitant as if it came from some inner depth.

“Are you going north or south?”

“South.”

The man on the sleigh edged over a bit.

“You might as well climb up?”

“I suppose so.”

Slowly he took his seat astride the load behind

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him. They fussed a bit before they were finally settled. Then there was a jerk on the reins, and the horse ambled off again.

They rode on for some time. No one said anything. Finally he in front turned his head a bit.

"It's so queer in this moonlight," he said, "I really was frightened when I spied you. It struck me, you were so pale—you actually looked like a ghost."

He held his head half turned as if he expected an answer. No answer came. Half surprised he turned his head forward again.

Not a word was spoken. All was still as they ambled slowly onward over the long level moor, now in moonlight, now in shadow.

The moon began to descend in the west. One by one the lights in the windows on both sides of the valley died away and finally flickered out. A weird air of desolation crept over the valley. Only the gaard on the hillside, where the little bypath went up, still gazed out over the valley with its steady monotonous eye that never blinked.

This light came from a lamp hung suspended from the ceiling by a long steel wire, which threw its sheen in radiating circles, but so faintly that darkness peered out of every corner of the room. Most brightly it shone on the massive white-scoured wood table, which stood directly beneath it, and the white dial on the tall clock, which stood opposite. There was no fire

in the room; the ingle was dark. But a genial warmth issued from the great kitchen oven which loomed up dark near the hearth.

On one end of the table white linens lay spread out, and on either side of a corner two women sat sewing.

One of them was elderly, somewhat plump and short waisted, with a broad face and definite, well-formed features. She wore a pair of heavy spectacles with brass bows and a cord round her neck outside her apron, but they were pushed so far forward on her nose that she had to raise her head now and then to see her sewing properly; and as she did so she displayed a pair of quiet blue eyes.

The other was young, but tall and comely. There was something mature in everything about her—her coarse-cut features, her strange, firmly set, steel blue eyes, her broad powerful mouth, and her full bosom which seemed almost too large for her narrow body. Her hair was light and straight, but she hardly impressed one as a blonde; there appeared at her neck a darker hue which ran like a subdued shadow over her entire face and appeared again on her arms underneath her sleeves, almost downy, all the way down to her little hand, tanned and firm, which worked with the seam a little uncertainly.

It was quite still; neither of them spoke. The large clock sounded forth its even, monotonous tick, while the little second hand on the lower part of the

dial moved round and round like a faint shadow. Now and then the linen crash sang forth as they ran their needles over it to mark a hem.

The older woman once in a while looked up over her spectacles at the other, as if she had in mind to say something, but lowered her head again when she did not catch her eye.

And the clock ticked, and the needles sang again.

"You are so quiet and preoccupied today, Karine," the older woman finally remarked without looking up.

There was no answer.

"Well, it's not to be wondered at either, I'm sure, if strange ideas suggest themselves when one is sewing on one's bridal outfit. I can still remember well enough how it was with me."

Karine bent her head still more over her sewing, until the old woman could see only the very top of her forehead, and a deep red creeping up to the very roots of her hair.

"Ah, yes, it seems queer to enter the new life," she continued, "but you'll see, we'll all be happy together. You and I'll manage to get along all right, and a kinder husband it would be hard to find. Niels is so straightforward and so trusting."

Karine did not answer, and there was a pause.

"And a good living you'll have too," the old woman continued; "Niels is to take over the farm in the spring."

All was quiet again for some time.

"I wonder what's become of Even tonight?" she continued.

Karine suddenly turned her head, shot a brief glance at the door, and quite as suddenly bent down over her sewing again.

"Ah, yes, Even! There seems to be different stuff in him than in Niels. No one would believe they were brothers. Oh, Karine—?"

There crept into the old woman's voice a tone of familiarity. For the first time Karine looked up, and the old woman puzzled a bit at the strange vacant expression on her face.

"Yes?"

"They say that Even was over your way now and again this fall. Did you hear anything about it?"

"No."

"I imagine it's your sister he has in mind. She is to have the gaard, I hear. Do you think she'd take him?"

Karine stared vacantly straight ahead and did not answer.

"Didn't you hear what I was saying?"

"I suppose so, if father is willing."

Karine was again bent over her sewing. The old woman eyed her a moment, thrust out her lower lip deprecatingly, and bent over her sewing likewise.

"Niels is certainly making a stay of it in town. But surely he'll be here this side of midnight."

No answer.

"You'll see, he has forgotten," she resumed a little later, "that he's to be married in three days. We'll have to unload in the gray dawn tomorrow if we are to get everything in readiness."

Another pause.

"Oh, he hasn't really forgotten,—I don't mean that, —but he is so shy he won't admit there is any need to hurry home. He would hardly have brought himself to the point of proposing to you either if your father had not come in opportunely and thus enabled me to help him on with it."

Still another pause.

"But, you'll see, he'll not long remain so shy after you're once married."

Then all was still again. The sewing buzzed, the clock ticked, the second hand glided like a shadow round the white dial.

Suddenly Karine ceased working her fingers. She did not move her head but she seemed to listen with her eyes. Her fingers went to work again faster than ever, and again her eyes listened. She bit her lips together, her head sank even lower, and her fingers worked nervously.

A moment later the old woman raised her head, pushed her kerchief back behind her ears, and listened. The creaking of quick but uneven footsteps could be plainly heard in the road just outside the window.

"That must be Even," she said.

The steps slackened as they approached the house, were lost to the ear for a moment outside the hall door, then entered the hall heavily.

The latch was raised warily.

Both women looked towards the door almost wholly shrouded in darkness.

Karine's eye caught the lower part of a face,—he appeared curiously short as he turned his face down while he entered.

The old woman did not have time to look. A shrill, piercing cry from Karine, as if in blended joy and pain, startled her.

And the old woman too cried out.

"In Jesus' name, how you frightened me, Karine! What is it?"

"I pricked my finger."

A few drops of blood had spotted the white linen, and she put her finger in her mouth and nursed it.

Even immediately crossed the floor, spread his mittens leisurely over the stove pipe, and took a seat on a low bench in the dark corner between the wall and the stove, directly behind his mother and directly opposite Karine.

"Have you been out walking, Even?" the mother asked after a pause.

"Yes."

"Don't you want something to eat? There's food in the cupboard."

"No."

Between each question and answer there was a pause, broken only by the swish of the sewing and the ticking of the clock.

"Is it cold out tonight?"

"Yes."

"You didn't see anything of Niels?"

She received no answer, nor did she seem to expect any, for she did not repeat her question.

"Well, you might as well go to bed, Even," she suggested after a longer pause. "We'll sit up and wait for Niels."

The time went so slowly, so slowly. There the three of them sat in a row, and no one stirred or said anything. Karine's hands had fallen idly in her lap, and now the mother's did likewise. The lamp burned quietly and evenly without a flicker; only the wee little hand crept round and round, still as a shadow, endlessly.

Suddenly a shudder ran through the old woman. She stirred, gave her stool a jerk unconsciously, as if to get it out of the line between the two, but gave it up, moved once or twice nervously on her chair, turned her head and looked towards Even, but gave that up too. She sat quietly for a moment, then fidgeted still more nervously on her chair, and looked about uneasily.

"Such a terror seized me, Karine, when you cried out," she remarked. "And it's so dark here, too."

She pulled herself together and rose to turn up the lamp. Then she went over to the cupboard drawer to get a candle, placed it on the table, but did not light it. She sat down again.

"I can't understand what's come over me," she ventured after a bit; "it seems so far to the wall."

All was still again for a long time. The hands of the clock crept round.

"But shouldn't Niels be coming soon?"

She sank down again. It seemed almost as if the words echoed and reëchoed in the room for a long time afterwards.

"Shouldn't Niels be coming soon? Shouldn't Niels be coming soon?"

It seemed to her as if the faint tick of the clock echoed the question; as if the quick heavings of Karine's bosom, which rose and fell staccato-like with every breath, rephrased it; as if she heard herself repeat it again and again, only more faintly, more faintly.

"For heaven's sake, talk to me," she suddenly cried out. "Here you sit, both of you, as though you were dead!"

There was no answer. A short deathlike stillness.

All at once she pushed her chair into the center of the floor, but remained seated, that she might see them both. She stared at them in turn; they turned their faces down. To one side sat Karine, her lips tightly

pressed together, her slightly prominent cheek bones flushed a deep red. Over in the dark she glimpsed Even's face, so dreadfully pale.

She rose, steadied her shaking hands for a moment on the back of the chair, leaned her upper body forward, and seemed to glide backwards to the wall. Her eyes went from one to the other, her lips moved as if she wanted to cry out, but no sound came.

There was a deathly stillness.

She slipped forward again towards the table.

"Even, come here!"

He got up, came slowly across the floor, but did not look up.

She faced about nervously, as if afraid to turn her back to Karine, and thrust her face close to his.

"Will Niels *ever* come home?" It was scarcely more than a piercing whisper.

To him it seemed that he had received a blow on his neck as she uttered the words. He fell down on his knees, and struck the table with his forehead.

The old woman turned about and faced Karine.

"And you have known it?"

He lifted his head and cried out in anguish.

"No, mother, Karine has known nothing!"

Karine shook so violently that even her chair trembled.

"I have *wished* it!"

The old mother sank down on her chair. Even lay with his forehead against the table. Karine had

slipped down on the floor and rested her head against the edge of her stool.

The stillness of death was there—only the clock ticked, and the tiny hand crept round like a shadow.

THE NIGHT WATCHMAN

By AVETIS AHARONIAN

(Armenian)

IT was cold and wintry, and a blizzard was blowing. For days it had been so dark and stormy that the people of O—— could not remember when they had last seen daylight or sunlight, warm days or clear skies.

How the wind blew! It bore such a threat and a menace in its moaning and howling that it seemed to come from the city of Death. It toyed with the snow; it licked up objects with its deadly breath.

It was not only the people of the village who shivered in the blast; but even the huts, the haystacks and the piles of fuel trembled in that fierce wind, and cowered in the thick darkness. Were they trembling with cold, or shuddering with fear? The village was in the grip of terror.

To the villagers the clouds, the lightning, the wind and storm were not the insensate, careless play of the elements, but a scourge sent them for some specific reason. They were sure it was so. Why should they not tremble? The sign of the cross will fend off lightning, but when there is a blizzard there is nothing to do but to huddle in the warm coffeehouse.

“Whoo-whoo-whoo-oo!” whistled the wind, and at

every repetition of the terrifying sound the occupants of the seats lined against the walls of Melik-Schahen's coffeehouse broke off their talk, and, removing their pipes from their mouths, gazed into one another's faces in alarm, and huddled still closer together.

"Good Lord! Snow is good and the cold has its place, but what message does this wind seek to convey?" some one exclaimed. But no one ventured to give expression to the meaning of that mournful song of the elements, though all felt that it was a terrifying dirge which the wind, that everlasting pilgrim, has composed of the sorrows of the earth, the groans of the weak, the cries of the suffering, the tears of the wretched and the supplications of the needy.

Not a breath of pain is lost in space, from the faintest, most pitiful plaint to the most heartrending shrieks; they are all gathered by the wind into its eternal bosom for an everlasting testimony. They are borne to high mountain peaks, they are compressed in gloomy caverns, to be let loose again and descend upon the earth, uttering cries of fear and pain, whispers and threats of an inevitable fate.

So thought the villagers seated in the coffeehouse. They were listening to a dirge composed of the moans of the dead, the screams of fiends, the howls of wolves; for do not all these come out of their abodes during storm and tempest and render nature still more terrible with their unearthly cries? They make the hair stand on end; they parch the tongue; they choke the throat.

"Whoo-whoo-whoo-oo!" The tempest increased in fury. The roof of the coffeehouse creaked as though trodden by heavy footsteps.

"Oh! It is hell outside!" exclaimed one, for the sake of saying something. "May my enemy not be freezing on the mountains!"

"Go as far as the vineyards, if you dare, let alone the mountains," said another.

"Heaven and earth are at grips."

Silence once more. There was much to ponder.

The outer door creaked, and all eyes were turned in that direction. In the dim light they saw a figure wearing a cloak white with snow. The man had been out in the storm for hours.

"Good e'en," said the newcomer, shaking off the snow.

"God give you a good e'en." "Why! poor Hai, come in, come in, you poor fellow. You must be frozen!" cried one and another heartily. "Give him a seat."

"Let him be seated."

"Yes, *wallah!* I am frozen," said the newcomer, stepping forward. "I couldn't stay outside any longer. The heavens are falling. They crush a man to earth. What a storm! What a tempest! I had to come into the coffeehouse for a few minutes to get warm. Then I'll go out again," he said, taking a seat.

Above the fireplace, in a small clay lamp filled with olive oil, a feeble wick was burning, its murky flame

flickering and swaying. It, also, seemed to cower before the wind; but still it gave a pitiful light, enough to outline the faces that peered out from under the heavy astrakhan caps, and a few feeble, yellow rays fell on the face of the newcomer.

It was the face of a peasant, on which a life of toil and suffering had left its heavy imprint. He was young in years, but looked old in experience. The firmly compressed lips under the thick mustache gave him a look of determination. His eyes were small, but restless and fiery. He was the village night watchman.

There had been many Hais in the village. The rest had gone, but this one had remained, like a deserted crane. He didn't care to beg, so he became a watchman. No one knew his name. It was really Nakho, and some had called him Mukho and others Muggo, but finally they all compromised on Hai, or the Armenian. Although they were all Armenians, he was a stranger from the village of Vozon, and it was easier to call him Hai. It was this Hai who was now sitting in a corner against the wall.

How warm it was in the coffeehouse! Outside the storm continued unabated. The wind howled like a wounded animal.

"It was on a night like this that the poor fellow came to grief," said Reis Kevon. The village chief was referring to a villager who had been caught in a blizzard a few days before and had perished in the snow.

"How many times we said: 'Don't go; don't wander about in the wilds in this snow and sleet. You have a wife and child,' " observed another.

"Oh, what foolish talk!" replied Melik. "It was written upon his forehead that he must go and perish. Who can escape his Fate?"

"That's true, true enough, Melik," said one and another. "The writing on one's forehead cannot be effaced."

Fate, all-powerful Fate! What more fitting subject for conversation than this blind force, at this dread hour of night, here in this underground coffeehouse, while the furious blast outside brings melancholy tales to mind?

Each offered some observation, and all were agreed that man is the toy of Fate, that all human means and efforts are powerless to overcome it.

"I don't believe in Fate," spoke a voice from a corner of the room.

All eyes turned in that direction.

"Who's that *azhtah* (dragon)?" sarcastically inquired Melik.

"It is I, your servant, Melik. I don't believe in Fate," replied the same voice, in a firm tone.

The men didn't know whether to laugh or to be angry. The one who didn't believe in all-powerful Fate was the miserable night watchman!

"The scurvy goat goes crazy," quoted Melik, more vexed than amused. The watchman's presumption

really annoyed them all. Rich, powerful Melik believed in Fate and feared it. Reis Kevon, before whose rod all trembled like aspen leaves,—even he was in deadly fear of Fate. The priest wound up every sermon with admonitions about Fate. Every one of them feared it, and yet here was this miserable fellow who neither believed in it nor feared it!

“No, I don’t believe in Fate,” repeated Hai even more stoutly, as he observed the scornful looks cast in his direction. “And I could prove to you that I am right, but, alas, I must go now and take a turn around the village,” he continued, rising to leave.

“Stay, stay, Hail” cried several, piqued with curiosity. “Tell him to stay, Reis; the village isn’t going to be plundered tonight.”

With the consent of the village chief, Hai seated himself once more. All looked expectantly at him, waiting to hear the story of this man who so stoutly denied belief in Fate.

“That year,” began the watchman, “there were ten of us—ten desperate fellows. We had been wandering for months from desert to desert, from valley to valley, from mountain to mountain. We had been drinking with the snakes, sleeping on their beds of stone. What else could we do? We had swallowed our pride. We had had unbounded patience, but there was no limit to the cruelty of our enemies, their heartless cruelty. We had no bread left, or only such as could not be eaten. It had become bitter like poison. So we had left hearth

and home, wife and child, and, setting out, each with his rifle on his shoulder, sought to wipe away the stain on our honour.

"We did well. Now we were free. Oh! when a man has had such sorrows as ours, when his sister, his wife and his mother have been dishonoured; when his child has been killed and his aged father reviled, then he has nothing left—nothing but his rifle.

"The Turks and Kurds called us *fetavi* (those consecrated to death), but the Armenians called us avenging devils. The fear of us went before us; we left death in our wake. We shared the mountain-tops with the eagles. How far we journeyed! How many Turks and Kurds we slew—their evil purposes unfulfilled! They sought us everywhere, but we were invisible; we were everywhere and yet nowhere. It is not easy to trace a *fetavi*; it is dreadful to meet one. That's how it was with us, and we were waiting for our Fate. We believed in it implicitly.

"One day, when we were on the top of Mount Sim, we ran out of provisions. The lot fell to me to go after some. I knew the villages of that region. I went down from our hiding-place by day, without a weapon, without even a staff. I did not think I should meet an enemy, and, if I should, my being unarmed might be my salvation. But if I perished it would be because it was so written. And so I went.

"For a time I saw no one. I had to cross a mountain to reach the valley beyond. I climbed the slope,

and there on the top appeared a Kurdish soldier, fully armed.

“ ‘Salutations, *Kirva* (master),’ I said carelessly.

“ ‘Salutations, *fla*,’¹ replied the Kurd; but he did not pass on. He stood and looked me over.

“ ‘I didn’t pause, but continued on my way. But I felt him standing there and looking after me. I did not hurry, in order not to arouse his suspicions.

“ ‘Hey, *fla*, stop!’ I suddenly heard him cry. I stopped and looked back. ‘It is my Fate,’ I said to myself. I quite expected that my Fate would overtake me in the shape of just such a Kurd, his rifle on his shoulder, his curved scimitar at his side, an ivory-handled dagger thrust into his girdle. He had an evil face, with eyes like those of a famished wolf. He drew near me.

“ ‘In these days and in these regions no *fla* dares to show himself,’ said the Kurd. ‘You don’t look like the right sort to me. Who are you? Where are you going?’

“ ‘Kurd,’ I said, ‘times are evil. But we are neighbours. I tell you, neighbour, that I am from Khout. There is famine in our region, as you know. I am on my way to Terchan to find bread for my little ones. Let me go on my way in peace.’

“ ‘No, *fla*, you can’t deceive me. You’re not the right sort.’

“ ‘Kurd, you have a God. As you see, I have no

¹ A term of contempt; in modern parlance, “wop.”

weapon. I have no knife. What can I do with nothing but my two hands? Let me pass.'

" 'Walk in front of me. I am going to take you to the governor.'

"To the governor! That looked bad to me.

" 'Kurd, don't take me to the governor. He won't harm me, but I shall be late. It will be a pity for my little ones. They will die of hunger. For God's sake, Kurd, let me go.'

"The Kurd had no mercy. 'It's my Fate,' I said to myself, and, with head bent low, I went ahead. What could I do? I was in his power. The rifle was on his shoulder; the sword was at his side; the dagger was in his girdle. We went along.

"Everything about us was beautiful. The sun was bright. The sky was clear. The hills were green. The flowers were fragrant. Birds filled the air. There was life and joy all about. Far, far up in the sky a stork was sailing, bold and free. I seemed to forget my fears for myself as I watched the bird, long and steadily. Was I envying it, or was there some other reason why I watched it so intently? I don't know why it was. The stork was soaring overhead, when suddenly it began its spiral descent and lighted on a hill very near us. I judged there must be a snake there which the stork had seen from above. Hearing the rustle of wings, the reptile hid its head underneath its coils. Then a terrible struggle began. We both stopped to watch it.

“ ‘Do you see that?’ said the Kurd. ‘The snake is a *fla*, and that’s how he should be destroyed.’ ”

“I made no reply. I was watching. The stork had alighted. It gave a stab at the snake with its bill and then stepped across it. The snake tried to escape, but before it could uncoil itself, its dreaded enemy flew at its head. The snake curled up and hid its head again. The Kurd was right. My condition and that of the snake were very similar. His Fate had overtaken the snake. There was no hope for him, I was thinking. The thought gave me some comfort. Little by little the stork grew bolder. He stabbed oftener and harder. Finally, thinking that the snake was losing strength, he stood beside it to give a final blow. The snake had kept its head hidden and had done little to defend itself. Now the stork was very close to it. All at once a remarkable thing happened. The dying reptile gathered itself together for a last effort, raised its head, uncoiled its body, and rising upright, threw itself upon the stork and wrapped its deadly coils around his long neck. In vain the stork tried to free his neck from the deadly embrace. His wings trailed. His beak sank in the dust. He plunged backward and forward. He tried to fly, to rise in the air and escape—all his efforts were in vain. The desperate fury of the snake was terrible. Its coils grew tighter and tighter, and at last the bird fell lifeless to the ground. Then the snake loosened its hold and slipped away.

"The Kurd said nothing. He only looked at me, and we gazed at each other for a long moment. Each was trying to read the thoughts of the other. There was no doubt but that each was thinking dreadful things about the other. We could read that clearly in each other's eyes. I could see that, aroused by the unexpected victory of the snake over the stork, he was determined to kill me. His look had grown more malevolent. But I was thinking, too. The struggle between the snake and the bird had brought about a change in me, also. I had never heard that a snake was able to throttle a stork. The stork is the snake's deadly enemy, the embodiment of its Fate. How did it happen that on this day its Fate had failed to overtake it? Would God, who did not allow even a vile snake to become the unjust prey of the stork, allow my Fate to be settled by this Kurd? No, I said to myself, I was wrong. One must find a way, I began to ponder. I tried to think of some way. But what way? I had not even a knife. At that moment my eye fell on the dagger stuck in the Kurd's girdle. Ah! If only I had that—only that!

"'Go on!' thundered the Kurd. 'What are you stopping for?'

"I walked on. We were entering a dark, lonely valley. The Kurd began to look about anxiously. He lowered his rifle from his shoulder, but put it back again. I felt that the end was near. But I didn't

wish to die yet. If a snake has a right to live, how much more has a man? My steps grew slower. I must not walk ahead of the Kurd. That was dangerous.

“‘Hurry, walk faster!’ urged the Kurd. He was trying to keep me in front of him, while I was trying to walk abreast of him. We understood each other. We were engaged in a silent combat—a mortal combat, terrible with its secret plottings.

“Suddenly I stopped. I had to tighten the cords of my sandals. The Kurd overtook me, and he stopped, too. Without raising my head I took note of his position. He was standing at my right, the white handle of the dagger protruding from his girdle.

“‘Be quick! Hurry, *fla!*’ he cried angrily, seeing how slow I was.

“In a flash I rose, and, seizing the dagger before he could make a move to defend himself, I drove the weapon into his breast. With a groan he sank to the ground. I was saved. Behold the dagger that saved my life!”

The watchman drew an ivory-handled dagger from his girdle and held it before his hearers. All leaned forward and gazed at the evil-looking tool that had freed a man from the entangling meshes of Fate. Hai, that insignificant, bent figure of a man, had become an *azhtah*, a dragon in their eyes. He had overpowered Fate. He scorned Fate. He was right.

Again Hai announced: "I don't believe in Fate." But this time none laughed him to scorn. They heard him in respectful silence.

He picked up his dagger, and, thrusting it back into his girdle, strode out of the room, with never a word from the company.

Outside the wind was raging as before, but now it was not freighted with the paralyzing dread of Fate. Among the many voices in the air, men heard the call to fight for freedom.

A NIGHT-PIECE

By BERIT-SPONG

(Swedish)

WHEN Elvira, only daughter at Solia Place, was eight years old, she was given a mouth organ by her father, when he returned from the horsefair at Askersund, after selling the two dappled grays. As a matter of fact, he had promised her a china head for the rag doll which the maids had sewn for her, but he had not remembered until he was driving out of the town gate, so the horse boy had to hop off and run back for Elvira's present.

"Get anything at all and be quick about it!" was called after him, and as he had such loose reins for his commission, it was not surprising that he let his personal taste direct him.

The doll had been put in the bottom of the cupboard. It would get its head anyhow, of course—that had been promised—but there it had to sit a long while. It was made of ordinary sheeting, which was cut double and sewed together, this receptacle being filled with sawdust till it was firm and solid. The body, therefore, was complete, and at first Elvira went to look at it. She then had the new present in her apron and was by no means glad of the exchange.

But after a couple of days she forgot all about the doll. The kitten had been playing with it, and in one, two, three the sawdust had run out. What was there to save up after that? The mouth organ had already come into high favor by then; why, she could even get notes out of it. After that Elvira was all for the mouth organ.

The old groom taught her a couple of little tunes, polkas which he had danced to when he was twenty. He was sixty now and couldn't always remember the rhythm; it isn't so easy with such things when the blood no longer dances in time. But he felt his way along gradually, and she sat beside him, on the green bank or on the cellar roof among the dandelions, or on the fodder board when autumn began. She was really not hard to teach. It wasn't long before she noticed when he got the time wrong, and said, "No, that's too fast," or "How you drag it, how you drag it! Look, I'm asleep!"

When she knew the melodies as near as that, she took the mouth organ away from him and played it smoothly and softly, nodding to keep time.

"That's how it is!" she said proudly, tapping the instrument on her knee, as she had also learned to do.

"Yes, but the tune went up too high there," he would say, so as not to show himself entirely conquered and carried away by uncritical enthusiasm. Otherwise it was correct, for she had carried the melody in her head.

"You and your tune!" the disrespectful scholar would cry, the dark ringlets dancing about her ears. "I don't bother about that, I don't; but don't I keep the time? Listen, don't I keep the time?"

So she would play again, and her hair-ribbons would swing like captive red butterflies in the evenest two-step time.

Even the old groom had to yield a bit in his judgment. If he but closed his eyes, he could imagine himself standing on the board floor in the moonlight long ago at just the moment when girls wait and lads choose and things are a bit silent and embarrassed, so that the accordion comes out strong and clear, and every one feels that now, now, it will begin.

When Elvira was older, she went to school and taught herself dance games on the gravel around the flagstones. When she reached the upper school, she stood by the organ singing *Our Land* and thought: "I'll go over this when I get home." For she still had a mouth organ; not the old one, of course, for now she had to have a bigger and finer instrument.

She was welcome wherever she came, for she started no end of jollity with the stimulus of her dance rhythms.

After the autumn killing when the farm girls sat with the big chopping-troughs on their knees—it was in the days before mincing machines were common—she would step out into the kitchen and announce. "Wait now, here comes the chopping march!" With that the

knives began to gallop more gaily, and if she stopped, there would be a cry of, "Keep on, Elvira; then our arms won't get tired!"

The drawbridge over the brook could be raised and lowered to the *Marseillaise*, and even the old black dairy horse, which was otherwise so untemperamental, was transfigured into a state of pure oblivion, when Elvira sat on the edge of the stall, and made at least ten turns around.

So she came to be a big girl and continued her progress. Her hair was no more fastened over her ears but was gathered in a knotted braid, which had to be worn double, for otherwise it would have been too long and would have caught on the apron buttons at her waist. Her eyes were as big and sparkled as much as before when she laughed, but she walked a trifle more sedately on the road, and it was only her haversack that swung out in time with her steps. There was a dance and shimmer about her, more deep though more furtive than of old—a sense of vitality and glowing youth.

But to dances at the crossroads or on Trinneholm she might go no more. Her father had forbidden it: "No, hardly, not with stableboys; you are a little too free and easy." She didn't miss it as much as one might have thought, for she had always been Elvira of Solia Place there anyhow. So much of a proprietor's daughter she was, and an East Gothlander too for that

matter, that she knew her worth, and knew that this was not her proper background.

She was confirmed, and next year on her birthday got a little piano. What, was that true that we all heard? Yes, a piano it was, a shiny black piano, not quite new but still complete in every detail.

It stood in the hall in the place of the old corner sofa, when she came down in the morning. It was open; it fairly laughed aloud at her, and she sat down dumb with amazement on a stool some distance off just to look at it. But her mother went around it in a great flurry, brushing the black keys, although it had just been dusted; and the maids flitted by at the door of the big pantry, where they appeared to be blinded and overawed with delight. Elvira, Elvira had a piano!

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So she drew a little nearer and stood and pressed down the keys one by one very cautiously till father came in. She looked at him; suddenly she realized that this was hers and stroked her finger over the whole keyboard so that a shrill and mighty quiver rang through the whole house.

He said, "Why, what the mischief! Shouldn't Elvira have a piano, when the parson and the manor place—and the rye, the rye crop this year. Elvira!" he commanded, for he was not a little set up just now; "tomorrow you're to go to the precentor and take lessons. I mean to have real music in the house; I can afford it."

And at the ratepayers' meeting he had also to defend his course: "These womenfolk, these womenfolk! I have two at home, that I have, and do you think they'd be satisfied with less than that I should buy Elvira a piano? To be sure, she's musical; that the whole parish knows; but the womenfolk in their vanity, how they stick together, glory! how they do stick together." And his fellow voters laughed as do those who are all under the same heavy ferule, and there was the usual freemasonry and the old wink of the eye that meant, "Aye, here's a man that is a man every inch of him." It's good to agree about something, something of that sort at least, in a ratepayers' meeting.

Elvira now went to the precentor and learned to play the piano. Quietly but completely she forgot the little mouth organ. This new instrument stood where it was, she couldn't take it with her either to the stable or the drawbridge. This caused her to become all at once a little more superior, and there was now a quite special atmosphere when she played on June evenings before the open window. Far over the place, out across the fields and country roads one could hear her; sometimes it would be a waltz, a regular boston; then it would change to church music. Yes, she was getting on, one could perceive.

Rhythm still throve in her; it rose and fell like the surf, and sometimes as she sat there she felt that now she must jump straight up, run out, rush around and

fly over the meadows like the swallows, or just stand still and sway softly and evenly like the white blossoms of the water-clover in the ripple of the waves. Still she sometimes turned to and milked the cows, so she wasn't so superior after all. She leaned against the great, calm beasts, as they chewed with such dignity, and let the golden-white milk run with alternate streaks into the pail. There was for her even here a song in time with her heart, which beat so strongly and steadily, hiding a jubilant rapture, something wholly new with the present spring.

It was simply that Stellan of the manor place had come home as a student. They had been together in the communion class and, just think! he suddenly remembered it this year, and they had met to talk over their old memories. How remarkable! But the old memories were really not so many, for which reason they had license to make new ones, quite fresh, newly wakened and golden as linden blossoms. Not a week passed that Elvira didn't get a new one, and morning and evening she would call them up before her so as to have a good look at them. That was the year she came to sixteen.

The two went together through the pastures; the spring sighed above them, and the cuckoo called for them. They went along, speaking much of the books he read, of concerts and music; oh, especially music. They spoke of what he chose; and he was, as he thought a gentleman should be, a bit cavilling and

supercilious. "A man must impress the womenfolks," he thought.

He did, in fact, make a great impression; he made Elvira quite shy, she felt herself so inferior all of a sudden. Who was this Kant, who was Sibelius, and what was his name again—the one that dwelt in the cave of Venus? She walked in silence, pretending to look when she set down the new patent leather shoes she now wore on his account. But she must have heard of Chopin? She looked up and was really pretty in her gratitude. Yes, Chopin, to be sure she knew him? She had seen his name on the precentor's shelf and in a book-shop window; she had heard a couple of words about dark flame and passion, but not a note of his music. Oh, she knew Chopin, knew him quite well, for that matter! Whatever else she said he certainly did not hear, for which one must not blame him.

She then took up her exercises and scales with desperate energy. It was for him; but it wasn't so easy to progress further. There were so many complications to remember, so many signs, new names and puzzling nuances, and the precentor got angry over and over again at her playing and told her that it stood still and didn't improve any more. At least he couldn't hear that it did.

She went about with her eyes hot from the tears she held back. But one morning father sat before her in

the holiday wagon, for now Elvira had to go to town and buy music; she couldn't be put off with less.

She bought Chopin's Nocturnes, though she was scared when she took a glance at the black swarm on the pages; but have them she must. "That's my only salvation," she thought as she sat stiff and straight against the side of the wagon, holding the roll on her knee. "Goodness, how he must despise me!" she thought. "I must learn something of all that he talks about."

It so happened that there was to be a big entertainment at her home about the middle of August, and both Stellan and his parents were to be there. He had said, "I suppose I shall hear you play then; I haven't had the pleasure before." "The pleasure," she thought, and concentrated on the phrase, "what would he have pleasure in hearing?" And in the dark feeling that she should like to show him something, something—she selected the passionate Chopin. "One must put one's soul into music"; those were the precentor's words, and that she would now do.

But her teacher was not exactly pleased with the purchase. "That will never do, Elvira," he said. "It demands, it demands"—he thought of saying something else, but it remained only—"that requires something more."

"Oh," said Elvira, "I'll practise then. The precentor may be sure, I'll make a special effort. I just shall learn it, I must."

"Gracious!" thought the precentor as he saw her eyes. "What's behind all this now? How pretty she is!"

So he gave in, because she had such pleasing eyes, eyes it was not easy to withstand.

But over by the door Elvira stopped for a bashful minute when she was to go after her first lesson in the new book.

"It's—I—I don't understand. It says—the title," she finally said with a tone of fixed resolution, "what does it mean?"

"Oh, Nocturnes, that's what you want to know," said the precentor, by no means displeased. "Why, that means night-pieces in Swedish. Night-pieces, you see, Elvira. They are choice things."

She went home thinking that this was altogether right and in order; it was for him she learned it, and he was very choice. She went home and was proud, for now she had vanquished the precentor. It was, however, true that she had been forced to give in a little and not take the hardest, the one she considered the choicest because it was in five flats. But she hadn't lowered herself to less than four anyway, and they had compromised on Number 10. *Lento* stood over the corner; it was to be played slowly. "Slowly, slowly," she repeated it to herself, but her feet went so swiftly on the road, and the blood sang in her, and she grew warm about the ears with happiness and excitement. What would he say, what would he think?

Surprised he would surely be, and happy too, that she could play such a piece. Oh, she couldn't do it yet, but diligence, in that she shouldn't fail.

She kept to her promise. She shut herself up in the hall and sat at the piano morning and evening. First she had to learn the right hand, then the left, and finally came the hardest, when they were to go together. But they did go.

She was certain that she didn't make a mistake of a single note when she went to the precentor for her next lesson. She had even conquered the deepest bass notes by the help of her exercise book, where she had them all written in with an illustration of the keyboard. So she had it right for good and all.

But her fingers trembled when she played at the precentor's. He stood beside her the whole time; did he too realize how important it was?

"That's correct enough," he said, "but still not correct. We must play slowly and yearningly. And put something into it, Elvira, or it will be simply dreadful."

"Surely," she said, and made an incredible effort. A wrinkle formed between her delicate eyebrows, her hair curled and grew damp on her forehead. "Surely," was all she said to his various admonitions.

Only when he ventured the suggestion that they should try something easier, a little waltz of Grieg, for instance—Grieg was very famous, very fine, too—she answered with just a "no" and again a "no."

Grieg, who had said anything about him? Not Stellan at least. No, with Chopin she had begun, and with him she would continue.

"Just wait, and you'll see. I haven't practised very much yet; it will be better."

"Oh, I can hear that you've practised," said the precentor helplessly, "but—"

There was always a "but," there was one every lesson; it increased till the word seemed to be written in capitals. It frightened Elvira a good deal, but still not enough. If she couldn't get it, she wasn't far off. Elvira of Solia could surely conquer if she practised.

"I can't urge you too much, Elvira," said the precentor, "to play softly and keep the mood; otherwise it will go to smash. This isn't a waltz, Elvira. It is night, the scene is sombre, and the atmosphere is full of feeling. Of feeling, you see, Elvira. There are fine folk coming tomorrow, and if you play, there mustn't be a fiasco. They understand music, the folks of the manor. If only the governess isn't there; she is the worst. But take it quietly now, Elvira, and softly, that's the main thing."

Next day the big shells around the circle on Solia lawn were newly washed and shining. There was even a diamond pattern on the walk, which Elvira had made with the back of a rake; she wouldn't have trusted any one else to do it. And there between the borders of scalloped sand the guests were now parad-

ing in one by one, while the carriages turned outside the gate, and the folks from farthest away unharnessed their teams in the stable-yard.

Elvira glinted from behind her parents at the vestibule door. She smiled at every one, curtsied, and shone in a new dress of dotted muslin. She had pinned a white gilly flower on her sash. But when Stellan jumped out of the droshky, it seemed as if she stood there merely to arrange the curtains in the vestibule windows—had the band come loose, or the nail, or were they hanging a little crooked? But she laid her hand in his, and immediately there came new guests to greet; there was no one surely who noticed how red her cheeks were.

The governess was there, sure enough. But Elvira thought, "I know it almost by heart, it'll be all right." For as soon as she saw Stellan, a breeze of fresh confidence came over her, and all she had been anxious about in solitude was swept away in a breath. It was as if her heart had lifted a single time when she first caught sight of him, there was just a little leap of rapture, and then it fell into an even and jubilant rhythm. Her deep color fell, remaining longest in the tips of her ears, which showed under her dark brown hair. They were bright pink and, shimmering against the sunlit panes where she stood, were just like coral.

The evening was passing. The worst of it was that she didn't know when to expect the great test. Would

it be their old neighbor of Staffansby who first asked her to play the *Marseillaise*, or would it be the cousins from Vadstena that wanted to dance?

She glided in and out and was almost a finished hostess in the art of giving and taking the necessary compliments. Her father's eyes often followed her. Oh, yes, she filled the bill, his 'Vira of Solia!

But all of a sudden the governess came up to her, and she felt that now it was coming.

"Can't we soon have a little something pretty in the musical way?" inquired the dreaded one. "What are you studying now; I hear you are taking lessons?"

"Yes," said Elvira, looking up quite resolutely, for it was so that she always concealed her diffidence. "I'm working on Chopin."

He for whose sake it had been said caught the words.

"What a surprise!" he cried, turning over the music. "Not a word of this have I heard. Yet I saw you—" He checked himself, for it was nobody's business that they had been walking together in Nycklinge Wood day before yesterday.

She said nothing, but looked about her in the room. The large hall contained many people, buzzing and prattling, and, when she had played a little while, it wouldn't make any difference; but at the beginning, oh, at the beginning they were always silent. With heroic decision she sat down on the round embroidered stool.

Stellan stood beside her. "May I turn for you?" he asked.

She looked up and nodded. He then smiled down at her, for he thought she looked sweet as she sat there.

She felt suddenly that now she could play, she heard a rhythm surging in her ears, a rhythm that sang within her as with the mighty beat of a pendulum, and she laid her hands on the keys. The governess sat directly behind her, but that she forgot. She felt that she was happy and strong and sure in her hands. She thought she was loved.

What she played she hardly knew. But sad, plaintive, and yearning it was not. It was no night, no sombre passion, no tender tears, nor was it high-souled and solemn either. It was a peasant dance, a song of summer sunrise with a swinging rhythm that wept, but was, as a whole, a melancholy without parallel. The girl understood nothing of the music; she felt only that a happy heart must dance and that such young arms had to give out a vigorous and resonant impact to carry the soul along somewhere. The great fault was in that overshadowing "but" which the precentor had dwelt on, to signify that a little 'Vira of Solia was not suited to a night-piece. But how could she help it, who slept with the dew and waked with the swallows and had no sorrow on earth? The result was a distress and an absurdity.

The precentor went out on the lawn when he heard her. "I thought not, I thought not," he said to him-

self over and over, but he got no further, for he constantly had to listen to the piano, which he could still hear. What didn't he think? That she should have dared, that she should make herself ridiculous, that she should be so stubborn and obstinate and deaf to all warnings!

"Confound it!" he muttered, throwing his cigar into the autumn lilacs, "what will they think of me? But peasants are peasants; they never hear what you say. Just follow their own sweet will, that's how they are! Now she's made a fool of me too, that's what I get for it!"

Yes, there she sat now and followed her own sweet will. In a certain way there was still a sincerity about her which no one understood, and in all the ludicrousness there was a touching quality which no one heard. And above all there was her obstinate pride too, but in that she was not alone. On the whole, there were not many who judged her, but she felt clearly enough how things were.

There was he who turned the music; he had been startled, shocked, and ashamed for her. There too sat the governess, who comprehended such things; she had perhaps been amused and the opposite, but now she only looked down at her own knees. It was very quiet in the room. The lady of the manor house saw that something was in the wind, saw it mainly but heard, too. When the piece was over, she stood be-

hind the piano stool and said, "My dear child, that was a little too serious for us, I'm afraid. Try a waltz, that will be better!"

By that time Elvira had already looked up and met a pair of eyes, accusing, hard, and pitiless. There was no scorn in them, to be sure, but neither was there any sympathy; for both of these the owner was too young. Now she met a pair that laughed at her a little. And the governess's! And the ladies! The latter were surprised and a little helpless, for no one had understood this kind of music and did they need to admit it?

The old patriarch from Staffansby said, "Let's have the *Marseillaise* Elvira dear! That's another sort of thing, that!"

The cousins came up: "That's fine, of course. But now we want to dance."

And the old lady of Nycklinge, who was cleverer and saw more than most, tried to console her: "Gracious! Elvira, how nimble you've got with your fingers by now. They took you along like lark's wings."

But Elvira spun around on her stool and turned toward the window. At least they shouldn't see her face.

It had begun to get dark, lights were brought in, and she rose. She must light the candles in the candlesticks by the piano, she said. It didn't matter that people noticed her. She only wanted to be alone a

little till the worst was over. In the doorway she met her father. She flung back her head.

"That was a little heavy, that piece," he said, and passed her. It wasn't her fault, she was still Elvira of Solia; she didn't faint or die because she couldn't play a night-piece so as to suit the manor folks.

On the right of the vestibule was a storeroom, which on such occasions as this was used as a cloak room, since there was nothing of that kind at the old place. The single window, which now stood open, faced the apple trees and the garden wall with the long grass, already weighed down with dew. Some four-o'clocks shone white in the dusk, and there was in the room a suggestion of an old garden's moist and pleasant tang, as well as a slight aroma from the stable, which lay on that side.

On the shelves along one wall lay hats and folded shawls, and as to the latter, one perceived from quite a way off that they had lain in camphor all summer. Now that it was autumn, the moon would shine on them again, while the wagons rolled home through the sleeping lowlands.

From the door-hinge two thick cloaks thumped to the floor, when Elvira opened the door, laying themselves down like a crouching black bear that guarded the entrance. But on the table lay the cousins' white lace veils, which they knotted over their hair, and she sat down there at the end of the table and fingered them.

But it was so depressing and strange in there! It seemed to her that she perceived something approaching her, stealing through the garden and sighing in the light curtains. Afraid she wasn't, but in some way she felt that summer was about to die, and for the first time she thought that this was her only summer. From afar off she heard that the governess was playing, but she couldn't any longer feel a twinge of envy. Two big tears fell on the veil, and she dried her eyes with it, not caring what she did.

But now the precentor likewise came to the store-room, after he had taken the air sufficiently on the lawn and mixed a little calm with his vexation. He was coming for his extra handkerchief, with which he cleaned his spectacles. He would need them now, for there were calls for a dance inside. If he knew Elvira rightly, she would play no more that night, and the governess kept only to the classics, as he knew.

There he saw Elvira sitting there in the dusk, and all his irritation vanished. He had no doubt meant to give her a good scolding, but, however it was, he perceived that it was the people inside that annoyed him. He was immensely annoyed with the whole kit and crew. Still, he had to say something, he thought. "Why in the name of all goodness did you play so lively, when I begged you, Elvira, when I begged you?"

She muttered very low, for it was terribly disturbing that he should see her here in the depths. "Oh, *now* anyway you may believe I could play it. Now

I'm so unhappy, it would do for five night-pieces as well as for one."

The precentor went to the window and pulled out his big handkerchief. He said nothing. He only felt all of a sudden that he was three times as old as she.

THE DEAD BEAT

By V. BLASCO IBÁÑEZ

(Spanish)

“**H**ERE is the notice,” said Perez, laying down his newspaper, “of the death of a friend of mine. I saw him only once, but he has been often in my thoughts. A fine man, he was!

“It was on the night train from Valencia to Madrid that we met. I was in a first-class compartment, and its only other occupant got off at Albacete. I was not sorry to be alone, for I could stretch out as much as I pleased, and the cushions looked very inviting. And so, confident that I should sleep like a log, I put out the light, threw my overcoat over me, and settled down full length with a sigh of relief that there was no one there to be bothered by my feet.

“The train was crossing the great plains of La Mancha. The engine was pulling at top speed, and the car groaned and jolted like an old stagecoach. The continual lurching kept me swaying back and forth on my shoulder, the suitcase was jiggling overhead, the windows were rattling, and a terrible screeching of steel came from the wheels and brakes. But as soon as I closed my eyes I began to succumb to the

rhythm and imagine myself back in childhood, lulled to sleep by the low voice of my nurse.

"Lost in these foolish fancies, I fell asleep, with the steady noise in my ears and the train never stopping.

"Suddenly a change in the air awakened me. A cold wind was blowing across my face. Opening my eyes, I found the compartment still empty and the door in front of me still closed. I was just drowsing off again when I felt another blast of chill night air, and starting up, saw that the door by my head was wide open and that there was a man sitting on the floor with his feet out on the steps.

"I was too startled to think; my brain was only half awake. My first sensation was one of superstitious terror. A man suddenly appearing there, with the train going at full speed, could be nothing less than a ghost. Then I thought of train robbers, hold-ups, murders, and I realised that I was alone, without any way of warning even those sleeping on the same side of the wooden partition. The man, of course, was a bandit!

"Impelled by the instinct of self-defence, I threw myself upon the creature, pushing against him with my elbows and knees; he lost his balance but clung to the edge of the door desperately, while I went on pushing, trying to weaken his grip and to shove him out. Certainly, I had the advantage of the situation.

"'For God's sake, leave me alone! I won't hurt

you!’” he gasped so meekly that I was ashamed of my behaviour and obeyed. He sat down again, panting and trembling, while I turned on the light.

“Then I saw what he looked like. He was a peasant, of rather slight build, dressed in an old leather jacket and faded breeches. His black cap was not much darker than his swarthy face, which set off a pair of huge staring eyes and a broken set of yellow teeth.

“The latter he was exposing in a broad grin of stupid gratitude, but at the same time he was fumbling in his sash—a detail that made me regret my generosity; so that while he was still searching I put my hand to my hip pocket and felt for my revolver. He was not going to catch me unawares!

“Slowly the man pulled something from his sash, and I imitated him, drawing my revolver half way out of my pocket. But what he produced was merely a little scrap of crumpled paper, which he held out to me in triumph.

“‘See, I’ve got a ticket.’

“I looked at it and laughed.

“‘But it’s an old one!’ I said. ‘It hasn’t been good for years. And besides, does that excuse you jumping on trains and frightening people in this way?’

“At that he turned pale, as if he were actually afraid I would try again to throw him off; but, nervous as I was, I was beginning to feel sorry for the fellow.

“‘You might as well come inside and shut the door.’

“‘No, thanks!’ he said firmly. ‘I haven’t the right

to ride in there; I'll stay out here. I have no money!'

"And he stubbornly kept to his seat in the doorway. I was sitting just beside him, my knees touching his shoulders. The wind was coming in like a hurricane as we sped along, and across the face of the barren plain skimmed a little patch of light from the open door, with our huddled shadows in it. Telegraph poles slipped by like yellow pencil strokes on the black curtain of night, and firefly sparks kept flying back from the engine.

"The poor fellow seemed restless, as though he were not used to sitting long unmolested. I offered him a cigar, and after a time we fell to talking.

"He told me that he had been making this same trip every Saturday. He waited for the train outside of Albacete, made a running leap for the steps, and then sneaked along the plank until he found a vacant compartment. Just before getting into a station, he would jump off the train, and then hop on again after it had started, always trying to get on a different car so as to escape the notice of hard-hearted trainmen.

"'But where are you bound for?' I asked. 'And why do you take such a risk every week?'

"It seemed he wanted to spend Sundays with his family. He and his wife were too poor to live together; she worked in one town, he in another. At first he used to make the journey on foot, walking all night long; but when he got there he would have to lie down exhausted, too weak to talk to his wife or

to play with the children. By and by he grew desperate, and found an easier way to get there. Just seeing his children gave him strength to work hard all the rest of the week. He had three babies, the youngest was not old enough to walk yet, but she knew him and threw out her arms for a kiss whenever he came.

“‘But don’t you realise that one of these trips may be your last?’ I asked.

“He smiled confidently. No, he was not afraid of the train as it came rushing towards him like a wild horse, puffing and blowing sparks. He had plenty of nerve; one leap, and there he was; and as for getting off, well, he might get a bump now and then, but he managed to keep clear of the wheels.

“His only fear was the passengers. Of course, a first-class car was apt to have empty compartments, but such narrow escapes as he had had! Once he got into a place reserved for ladies where there were two nuns, and their screams gave him such a scare that he dropped off and had to go the rest of the way on foot.

“One night, as he was stealthily opening a door, some one knocked him over the head and pitched him off. He certainly thought that was his last trip!

“As he spoke he pointed to a huge scar across his forehead.

“Yes, he got rough treatment, but he did not complain; he could not blame people for being frightened

and trying to defend themselves. He deserved all he got, and more; but how could he help it, when he had no money and wanted to see his children?

"Just then the train began to slow down, as if we were coming to a station. He stood up in dismay.

" 'See here,' I said. 'There is another stop before we get to your station and I'll pay your fare for you!'

" 'No, sir,' he replied candidly. 'The guard would get me going through the gate. He has never had a good look at me, and I don't mean to let him. But I wish you a pleasant trip, sir. You are the kindest man I've ever met!'

"And with that he went down the steps and disappeared along the plank.

"Pretty soon we stopped at a small station. I was about to have another nap, when all at once I heard excited voices on the platform. It was the train crew and the station porters directing the Guardia Civil in hot pursuit of some one.

" 'There he goes! One of you on the other side, so he can't get away! . . . Now he's up on top of the car! . . . Hurry!'

"And in a few seconds the roof above me was shaking under the heavy feet of the frantic police.

"I leaned out of my window just in time to see a man hurl himself from the roof of the car ahead. He landed in a heap, crept some distance on hands and feet, and then began to run at breakneck speed, soon lost in the cover of night.

"Meanwhile the conductor and the others were arguing and waving their hands excitedly.

" 'What's the matter?' I enquired of one of them.

" 'It's that fellow again who is all the time stealing rides,' he informed me. 'He is the parasite of the railroad! He's a dead beat, that's what he is! But we'll get him yet!'

"I never saw the 'dead beat' again. Often on winter nights I have wondered whether he were standing out in the blinding snow or rain somewhere, waiting for the unfriendly train to come along, and then stepping on with all the nonchalance of a soldier taking a trench.

"And here it says," ended Perez, pointing to his newspaper, "that a mangled body has been found on the track near Albacete. It's he—no need of identification to convince me. 'He that seeketh danger shall perish in it.' For four long years he must have kept it up, hunted like a wild animal every time he wanted to kiss his little ones, until at last pitiless daylight found him lying on the track, where black night had so often seen him challenge death with the coolness of a hero."

MONEY

By KAREL CAPEK

(Czech)

A GAIN, again it had come over him; he had scarcely swallowed a few mouthfuls of food when a painful heaviness seized him; a perspiration of faintness broke out on his forehead. He left his dinner untouched and leaned his head on his hand, suddenly indifferent to the landlady's officious solicitude. At length she went out sighing and he lay down on the sofa meaning to rest, but in reality to listen with alarm and attention to torturing sounds within him. The faintness did not pass off; his stomach seemed to have become a heavy stone, and his heart throbbed with rapid, irregular beats; from sheer exhaustion he perspired as he lay. Ah, if he could only sleep!

After an hour the landlady knocked; she handed him a telegram. He opened it in alarm and read "19.10. 7.34 Coming tonight. Rosa." What this might mean he simply could not grasp; bewildered, he stood up and read through the numbers and words, and at length understood—his married sister Rosa would arrive this evening and, of course, he must go and meet her. Probably she was coming to do some shopping, and he felt annoyed at the hasty, feminine

thoughtlessness and disregard for others, which disturbed him for no reason at all. He paced up and down the room, irritated because his evening was spoiled. He was thinking how comfortably he would have rested on his old sofa, soothed by the humming of his faithful lamp, with a book in his hand; he had passed weary and tedious hours there, but now, for some unknown reason, they seemed to him especially attractive, full of wise musings and very peaceful. A wasted evening, an end to rest. Full of childish and resentful bitterness, he tore the luckless telegram to fragments.

But that evening, when he was waiting in the lofty, cold damp station for the belated train, a wider feeling of distress took possession of him—distress at the squalor and poverty around him, the weary folk who arrived, the disappointment of those who had been waiting in vain. With difficulty he found his fragile little slip of a sister in the thick of the hurrying crowd. Her eyes were frightened and she was dragging a heavy trunk along, and at once he saw that something serious had happened. He put her into a cab and took her straight home. During the journey it occurred to him that he had neglected to find a room for her. He asked her if she would like to go to a hotel, but this only evoked an outburst of tears. He really could do nothing with her in that state, so he gave it up, took her thin, nervous hand in his, and was immensely cheered when she at length looked up at him with a smile.

Once at home he looked closely at her and was alarmed. Distressed, trembling, strangely excited, with flaming eyes and parched lips, she sat there on his sofa, supported by the cushions which he heaped round her and talked. He asked her to speak softly, for it was already night.

"I have run away from my husband," she burst out, talking quickly. "Ah, if you knew what I have had to bear! If you knew how hateful he is to me! I have come to you to advise me," and she burst into a flood of tears.

Gloomily George paced the room. One word after another called up before him a picture of her life with an overfed, money-grubbing, and vulgar husband, who insulted her before the servant, was ill-timed and immoderate in his affection, plagued her with endless scenes about nothing, foolishly squandered her dowry, was self-indulgent at home, and at the same time spent extravagantly on the silly whims of a hypochondriac. He heard the story of food doled out bite by bite, of reproaches, humiliations and cruelty, shabby generosity, frenzied and brutal quarrels, exacted love, stupid and overbearing taunts. George paced the room choking with disgust and sympathy: it was intolerable, he could not endure this endless torrent of shame and pain. And there sat the small, fragile, capricious girl whom he had never thoroughly known, his proud and violent little sister; she had always been combative, and refused to listen to reason,

her eyes used to flash wickedly when she was a small girl. There she sat, her chin quivering with sobs and with the ceaseless torrent of words, exhausted and feverish. George wanted to soothe her, but was half afraid.

"Stop," he said roughly, "that will do, I know all about it." But he was powerless to restrain her.

"Don't," wept Rosa, "I have no one but you." Then the stream of complaints began again, more broken, at greater length, in calmer tones; details were repeated and incidents enlarged upon. Suddenly Rosa stopped and asked:

"And you, George, how are you getting on?"

"As for me," grumbled George, "I can't complain. But tell me, won't you go back to him?"

"Never," declared Rosa excitedly. "That is impossible. I'd rather die than— If you only knew what it was like!"

"Yes, but wait," observed George. "In that case, what do you think of doing?"

Rosa expected that question. "I made up my mind about it a long time ago," she said warmly. "I will give lessons or go somewhere as a governess, to an office or anywhere. You will see how I can work. I'll get my living all by myself, and be so happy doing anything. You must advise me. I will find a room somewhere, just a little one . . . Tell me, something will turn up; won't it?" She could not sit still for excitement, but jumped up and paced the room beside

her brother with an eager face. "I have thought it all out. I will take the furniture, the old furniture, you know, which belonged to our parents; wait till you see. I really want nothing, but to be left in peace. I don't mind if I am poor, if only I don't have to—I want nothing else, nothing more in life than that, so little will suffice! I shall be satisfied with anything only if I am right away from—from all that. I am looking forward to working. I will do all my own sewing and sing over it—I have not sung for years. Ah, Georgie, if you only knew!"

"Work," reflected George doubtfully. "I don't know if any can be found—and anyway you are not accustomed to that, Rosy, it will be hard for you, very hard."

"No," retorted Rosa with flashing eyes. You don't know what it has been to be reproached for every mouthful, every rag, for everything. All the time to be told that you don't work but only spend. I should like to tear off all these things, it's all become so hateful to me. No, Georgie, you will see how glad I shall be to work, how happily I shall live. I shall enjoy every mouthful, even if it is only dry bread: I shall be proud of it. With pride I shall sleep, dress in calico, cook for myself. Tell me, I can be a working woman, can't I? If nothing else turns up I will go into a factory. I am looking forward to it all so much—!"

George gazed at her with delighted astonishment.

Heavens, what radiance, what courage in such a down-trodden life! He was ashamed of his own effeminacy and weariness; he thought of his own work with sudden warmth and happiness, infected by the ardent vitality of this strange, feverish girl. She had really become a young girl again, blushing, animated, childishly naïve. Oh, it will turn out all right, how can it fail to?

"I shall manage, you'll see," said Rosa, "I want nothing from any one, I will support myself, and I will really earn, at least enough to provide for myself, and have a few flowers on the table. And if I had no flowers there I would go into the street and just look at them. You cannot imagine how each thing has filled me with happiness since—I decided to run away. How beautifully, delightfully, different everything looks! A new life has begun for me. Till now I never understood how beautiful everything is. Ah, Georgie," she exclaimed with tears running down her face, "I am so happy."

"Little silly," Georgie smiled at her, delighted. "It will not be so easy. Well, we will try it. But now lie down, you mustn't make yourself ill. Don't talk to me any more now, please. I have something to think over, and in the morning I will let you know. Go to sleep now and let me think."

Nothing that he could say would induce her to take his bed; she lay down fully dressed on the sofa, he covered her with everything warm he had and turned

down the lamp. It was quiet; only her rapid, childish breathing seemed to appeal to heaven for sympathy. George gently opened the window to the cool October night. The peaceful, lofty sky was bright with stars. Once in their father's house they had stood by the open window, he and little Rosa; she, shivering with cold, pressed close to him, as they waited for falling stars. "When a star falls," whispered Rosa, "I shall ask to be changed into a boy, and do something glorious." Ah, father was asleep as soundly as a log; the bed could be heard creaking under his ponderous fatigue. And George, filled with a feeling of importance, meditated on something grand and with masculine gravity protected little Rosa, who was trembling with cold and excitement.

Over the garden a star shot across the sky.

"George," Rosa's voice called him softly from the room.

"All right, directly," answered George shivering with excitement and cold.

Yes, to do something great; there was no other way out. Poor, foolish creature, what great deed did you want to do? You have your burden to bear; if you want to do something fine carry a greater one, the greater your burden, the greater are you. Are you a weakling, sinking under your own burden? Rise and help to support one who is fainting: you cannot do otherwise unless you would fall yourself.

"George," called Rosa in a hushed voice.

George turned where he stood at the window. "Listen," he began hesitatingly. "I have thought it out. I think that—you will not find work to suit you. There is work enough but you will not earn enough to—oh, it's nonsense."

"I shall be satisfied with anything," said Rosa quietly.

"No, wait a moment. You really don't know what it means. You see, I have quite a fair salary now, I am glad to say, and I could get afternoon work, too. Sometimes I really do not know what to do. It is quite enough for me. And I could let you have money—"

"What money?" murmured Rosa.

"My share from our parents and the interest which has accumulated; that makes about five thousand a year. No, not five thousand, only four. It is only the interest, you understand? It has occurred to me that I could let you have that interest, so that you might have something."

Rosa bounded off the sofa. "That is not possible," she cried excitedly.

"Don't scream," growled George. "It's only the interest, I tell you. Whenever you don't want it you need not draw it out. But now, just for the beginning . . ."

Rosa stood like an amazed little girl. "But that will not do, what would you have?"

"Oh, don't trouble about that," he protested, "I

have thought for a long time that I should like to get afternoon work, but—I was ashamed to take work away from my colleagues. However, you see how I live; I shall be glad to have something to do. That's how it is; you understand, don't you? That money only hindered me. So now, do you want it or not?"

"I do," sighed Rosa, approaching him on tiptoe, flinging her arms round his neck and pressing her moist little face to his. "George," she whispered, "I never dreamed of this; I swear to you that I wanted nothing from you, but since you are so good—"

"Never mind," he said, deeply stirred. "That's beside the point. That money really does not matter to me, Rosa; when a man is fed up with life, he must do something. . . . But what can one do all alone? In spite of all efforts one can only come face to face with oneself again in the end. You know, it is like living surrounded by nothing but mirrors, and whenever one looks in them there is only one's own face, one's own boredom, one's own loneliness. . . . If you knew what that means! No, Rosa, I do not want to tell you about myself, but I am so glad that you are here, so glad that this has happened. Look how many stars there are: do you remember how once at home we watched for falling stars?"

"No, I don't remember," said Rosa, turning a pale face to his; in the dim frosty light he saw her eyes shining like stars. "Why are you like this?"

He thrilled with pleasant excitement and stroked her

hair. "Don't talk about the money. It is so dear of you to come to me. Heavens, how glad I am, as if a window had opened—among the mirrors. Can you imagine it? I really only cared for myself. I was sick of myself, tired of myself, but I had nothing else. . . . Oh! there was no sense in it at all. Do you remember, when the stars fell, what you asked for then? What would you ask for tonight if a star fell?"

"What should I ask?" Rosa smiled sweetly. "Something for myself . . . No, something for you, for something to happen for you?"

"I have nothing to wish for, Rosa, I am so glad to have got rid . . . Now, how will you arrange? Wait, tomorrow I will find you a nice room with a pleasant outlook. From here, you only look on to the yard; in the daytime, when there are no stars shining, it is a trifle depressing."

Quite excited and enthusiastic, he strode about the room planning out the future, eagerly picturing each new detail, laughing, talking, promising all sorts of things. Of course, lodging, work, money, would all be forthcoming; the main thing was that this would be a new life. He felt how her eyes shone in the darkness, smiling, following him with their ardent brightness; his heart was so full that he could have laughed for joy; he did not think of resting till exhausted, worn out by sheer happiness and too much talking

they fell into long pauses of weariness, in utter harmony.

At last, he made her lie down; she did not resist his quaint, motherly solicitude, and could not even thank him; but when he looked up from the piles of newspapers in which he was glancing through advertisements of lodgings and agencies, he found her eyes fixed on him with an ardent and strange brilliancy, and his heart was wrung with happiness. Thus morning found him.

Yes, it was a new life. His wretched lassitude was gone now as he swallowed a hasty dinner, then strode through countless houses in search of a room, coming home perspiring like a hunting dog and happy as a bridegroom, and settling down in the evening to plough through pieces of extra work, until he finally fell asleep, worn out and enthusiastic over a profitable day. But he had, alas! to put up with a room without a pleasant outlook, a detestable room, upholstered in plush and outrageously dear, where he placed Rosa, for the present. Sometimes, indeed, in the course of his work he was attacked by faintness and weakness, his eyelids would tremble, a sweat from giddiness breaking out on his suddenly livid brow; but he succeeded in mastering this, set his teeth and laid his hand on the cold slab of the table, saying resolutely: "Bear it—you must bear it—indeed, you are not living for yourself alone." In this way he did feel better and better as day followed day. This was a new life.

Suddenly one day he had an unexpected visit. It was his other sister, Tylda. She was married to a manufacturer in a small way who was not doing well and lived some little distance out of town. She always called on him when she came to Prague for anything—on business trips,—for she looked after everything herself. She used regularly to sit with eyes cast down and talk in brief, quiet phrases of her three children and her many worries as if there were nothing else in the world. Today, however, she alarmed him; she was breathing heavily, struggling in her cobweb of ceaseless cares, and her fingers, disfigured by writing and sewing, touched his heart and made it ache with sympathy. Thank heaven, she got out brokenly, the children were well and good, but the workshop was not going well, machines were worn out; she was just looking for a purchaser.

“And so Rosa is here?” she suddenly said in a half-questioning tone, vainly trying to raise her eyes. Strange to say, wherever her eyes rested there was a hole in the carpet, frayed furniture covers, something old, shabby, and neglected. Somehow or other neither he nor Rosa had paid any attention to such things. This vexed him, and he looked away; he was ashamed to meet her eyes, keen as needles and relentless as unceasing care.

“She has run away from her husband,” she began indifferently. “Says that he plagued her. Perhaps he did, but everything has a cause.”

"He had cause, too," she went on, failing to provoke questions. "You see, Rosa is—I don't know how to put it . . ." She was silent, stitching with heavy eyes at a large hole in the carpet. "Rosa isn't a housewife," she began after a time. "And of course, she has no children, need not work, has no cares, but—"

George looked gloomily out of the window.

"Rosa is a spendthrift," Tylda forced out of herself. "She has run him into debt, you see. . . . Have you noticed what her linen is like?"

"No."

Tylda sighed and made as if wiping something from her forehead.

"You have no idea what it costs. She buys, say, furs, for thousands, and then sells them for a few hundred to pay for boots. She used to hide the bills from him; then there came summonses. Do you know about this?"

"No. He and I are not on speaking terms."

Tylda nodded. "He is queer, of course, I don't dispute. But when she does not mend a scrap of linen for him, and when she herself goes about like a duchess—tells him lies—carries on with other men—"

"Stop," begged George in anguish.

Tylda's sad eyes mended a torn bed cover. "Perhaps she has offered you," she asked uncertainly, "to housekeep for you? Suggested your taking larger lodgings—and that she should cook for you?"

George's heart contracted painfully. This had never occurred to him. Nor had it to Rosa. Heavens, how happy he would be! "I should not want her to," he said sharply, controlling himself by main force.

Tylda succeeded in raising her eyes. "Perhaps she would not want it either. She has got him here—her officer. They transferred him to Prague. That's why she ran away—and has taken up with him—a married man. Of course, she has said nothing about it to you."

"Tylda," he said hoarsely, withering her with his glance, "you lie."

Her hands and face quivered, but she would not give in yet. "See for yourself," she stammered. "You are too kind-hearted. I would not have said this if—if I were not sorry for you. Rosa never cared for you. She said you were—"

"Go!" he cried, beside himself with rage. "For God's sake leave me in peace!"

Tylda rose slowly. "You should—you should get better lodgings, George," she said with dignified calm. "Look how dirty this place is. Would you like me to send you a little box of pears?"

"I don't want anything."

"I must be off. How dark it is here. Dear, dear, George; well, good-bye, then."

The blood throbbed in his temples, his throat contracted; he tried to work, but he had only just sat down when he broke his pen in a rage, sprang to his

feet and hurried round to see Rosa. He ran to her place in a sweat and rang; the landlady opened the door, and said that the young lady had been out since the morning: was there any message?

"It does not matter," growled George, and shuffled home as though carrying an immense load. There he sat down to his papers, leaned his head on his hand and began to study; but an hour went by and he had not turned over a page; dusk was followed by darkness, and he did not light up. Then the bell rang in a breezy, cheery way, there was a rustle of skirts in the passage and Rosa flew into the room. "You are asleep, Georgie?" She smiled tenderly. "Why, how dark it is here; where are you?"

"Eh? I have been busy," he remarked drily. There was an air of chilliness in the room and an exceedingly pleasant scent.

"Listen," she began cheerfully.

"I wanted to go round to you," he interrupted, "but I thought perhaps you would not be at home."

"Why, where should I have been?" she asked in genuine wonder. "Oh, how nice it is here. Georgie, I am so glad to be with you." Joy and youth breathed from her and she was radiant with happiness. "Come and sit by me," she said, and when he was seated beside her on the sofa she slipped her arm round his neck and repeated, "I am so happy, Georgie." He rested his face against her cold fur, bedewed with autumn mist, let himself be rocked gently, and thought: "Sup-

pose she has been somewhere, what is that to me after all? At any rate, she has come back to me at once." But his heart grew faint and oppressed with a strange mixture of keen pain and a sweet odour.

"What is the matter, Georgie?" she cried in shrill alarm.

"Nothing," he said as though lulled. "Tylda has been here."

"Tylda," she repeated, dismayed. "Let go of me," she said, after awhile. "What did she say?"

"Nothing."

"Come now, she spoke of me, didn't she? Did she say anything horrid?"

"Well, yes—a few things."

Rosa burst into wrathful tears. "The nasty creature. She is always jealous of everything I have. How can I help it that things go badly with them? She must have come because—because she found out what you had been doing for me. If things went better with them, she would forget all about you. It is so disgusting. She wants everything for herself—for her children—those horrid children."

"Don't talk about it," entreated George.

But Rosa went on crying. "She wants to spoil everything for me. I have scarcely begun to have a happier life when she comes along, slandering me, wanting to take things from me. Tell me, do you believe what she has been saying?"

"No."

"I really want nothing more than to be free. Haven't I a right to be a little more happy? I want so little, and was so happy here, George, and then she comes along—"

"Don't worry about that," he said, and went to light the lamp. Rosa stopped crying at once. He looked at her closely, as though for the first time. She was looking at the floor, her lips were trembling. Ah, how pretty and youthful! She had on new clothes, small gloves, so close fitting that they seemed ready to burst; and silk stockings peeped from under her skirt. Her little nervous hands played with the threads of the worn sofa-covering.

"Excuse me," he said sighing. "I have some work to do just now."

She obeyed and rose. "Ah, Georgie," she began, and did not know how to go on. With hands clasped against her breast, she gave him a swift, agonized glance and stood there, white-lipped, like an image of fear. "Don't be anxious," he said briefly, and turned to his work.

Next day he was sitting over his papers until twilight. He compelled himself to work mechanically, smoothly and unheedingly, and forced himself to go quicker and quicker; but all the time he was working there grew and deepened within him a keen sense of pain. Presently Rosa came in. "Go on writing," she whispered. "I shall not disturb you." She sat down

quietly on the sofa, but he felt that her passionate, sleep-robbed, vigilant eyes never left him.

"Why didn't you come to me?" she burst out suddenly. "I was at home today." He felt in this a confession which touched him. He laid down his pen and turned to her; she was dressed in black like a penitent, paler than usual, folded in her lap were her appealing little hands, which even from where he sat he felt must be cold.

"It is rather chilly there," he observed apologetically, and tried to talk as usual without making reference to the happenings of the previous day. She replied humbly and gently like a grateful child.

"About Tylda, you know," the words came all at once, "the reason things go so badly with them is that her husband is a duffer. He stood surety for some one and then had to pay. It is his own fault, and he ought to have thought of his children; but then, he doesn't understand anything. He had an agent who robbed him, and yet goes on trusting every one. You know they are suing him for fraudulent bankruptcy?"

"I know nothing about it," George turned it off. He saw that she had been brooding over it all night, and felt somehow ashamed. Rosa was not aware of his quiet rebuff: she lost her temper, got excited, and immediately played her highest card: "They wanted my husband to help them, but he obtained information

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and simply laughed at them outright. To give them money, he said, would be to throw it away; they have three hundred thousand of liabilities. . . . A man would be a fool to put a single heller into that; he would lose it all."

"Why do you tell me this?"

"So that you might know," she forced herself to a gentle tone. "You know you are so kind-hearted, you would very likely let yourself be deprived of everything."

"You are very kind," he said without taking his eyes from her. She was highly strung, burning with desire to say something more, but his scrutiny made her uneasy; she began to be afraid that she had gone too far. She asked him to find some work so that she might be a burden to no one, no one at all; she could live with strictly limited expenditure; she felt she ought not to have such expensive lodgings.

. . . Now at last perhaps she would offer to house-keep for him. He waited with beating heart, but she looked away towards the window and began on something else.

The next day he received the following letter from Tylda:

DEAR GEORGE:

I am sorry we parted under such a misunderstanding. If you knew all, I am sure you would read this letter differently. We are in desperate position. If we succeeded in paying off that fifty thousand we

should be saved, for our business has a future, and in two years it would begin to pay. We would give you every guarantee for the future if you would let us have the money now. You would be part proprietor of the works and take a share of the proceeds as soon as business began to pay. If you will come and look at our establishment, you will see for yourself that it has a future. You will also get to know our children better, and see how nice and good they are and so diligent, and you will not have the heart to ruin their whole future. Do it, at least, for the children, for they are of our blood, and Charles is already big and intelligent and gives promise of a great future. Forgive me for writing this, we are in a fine flutter and are quite sure that you will come to our rescue and become fond of our children, for you have a kind heart. Be sure and come. When little Tylda is grown up she will be glad to be housekeeper to her uncle, you will see what a darling she is. If you don't help us my husband will never get over it and these children will be beggars.

Kind love, dear George, from your unhappy sister,
TYLDA

P.S.—With regard to Rosa, you said that I told lies. When my husband comes to Prague he will bring you proofs. Rosa does not deserve your support and generosity, for she has brought shame on us. She had better go back to her husband; he will forgive her, and she ought not to rob innocent children of their bread.

George flung the letter aside. He felt bitter and disgusted, the unfinished work on his table presented an air of hopeless triviality. Disgust rose in a painful lump in his throat; he left everything and went round to Rosa. He was already on the steps before

her doors when he changed his mind with a sudden jerk of his hand, came down again, and strolled aimlessly about the street. He saw in the distance a young woman in furs on an officer's arm; he started running after them like a jealous lover, but it was not Rosa. He saw a pair of bright eyes in a woman's face, heard a laugh on rosy lips, saw the woman radiating and exhaling happiness, full of trust and joy and beauty. Wearily he returned home at last. On his sofa lay Rosa in tears. Tylda's open letter fell to the floor.

"Miserly creature," she sobbed passionately, "and not ashamed of herself. She wants to rob you of everything, Georgie; don't give her anything, don't believe a word of it. You can't understand what a crafty, avaricious woman she is. Why does she pursue me like that? What have I done to her? For the sake of your money—to slander me in that way! It is only—only because of your money. It is really monstrous!"

"She has children, Rosa," George observed gently.

"That is her own lookout," she cried fiercely, choking with sobs.

"She has always robbed us and only cares for money. She married for money; even when she was little she boasted that she would be rich. She is absolutely disgusting, vulgar, stupid—tell me, Georgie, what is there in her? You know what she was like when things went better with them—fat, insolent, unfriendly. And now she wants—to rob me. George,

would you let her? Would you get rid of me? I would rather drown myself than go back."

George listened with bowed head. Yes, this girl was fighting for everything, for her love and happiness; she wept with rage, she cried out in passionate hatred against every one, against Tylda, and even against himself who could take everything from her. Money—the word stung George like a whip whenever she said it; it struck him as shameless, disgusting, offensive.

"It was like a miracle to me when you offered me money," wept Rosa. "It meant for me freedom—everything. You offered it yourself, Georgie, and you should not have offered it at all if you meant to take it away again. Now, when I am counting on it—"

George was no longer listening. Remotely he heard reproaches, lamentations, sobs. He felt humiliated beyond measure. Money, money, but was it only a question of money? O God, how had it come about? What had coarsened the careworn heart grown hard and indifferent? What had money to do with it at all? In a strange way he was aware of his power to hurt Rosa, and of an inexplicable desire to wound her by saying something cruel, humiliating, and masterful.

He rose with a certain lightness. "Wait," he said coldly. "It is my own money. And I," he concluded with a magnificent gesture of dismissal, "shall think it over."

Rosa sprang up with eyes full of alarm. "You—you—" she stammered. "But at all events—that's understood. Please, Georgie—perhaps you did not understand me—I didn't mean that—"

"All right," he broke in drily. "I say I shall think it over."

A gleam of hatred blazed in Rosa's eyes; but she bit her lip, and went out with bowed head.

Next day there was a new visitor waiting in his room: Tylda's husband, an awkward, blushing man, full of embarrassment and doglike submissiveness. George, choking with shame and fury, refrained from sitting down, so as to compel his visitor to stand.

"What is your business?" he said, in the impersonal tone of an official.

The awkward man shivered and forced out of himself: "I—I—that is, Tylda—has sent some documents—which you asked for—" and began to hunt feverishly in his pockets.

"I certainly did not ask for any papers," said George with a negative wave of his hand. There was a painful pause.

"Tylda wrote to you—brother-in-law," began the unfortunate tradesman, blushing more than ever, "that our business—to put it shortly, if you would like to be a partner—"

George purposely let him flounder.

"The fact is—things are not so bad, and if you were

a partner, to put it shortly, our undertaking has a future, and as one who—shared—”

The door opened softly and there stood Rosa. She became petrified at the sight of Tylda’s husband.

“What is the matter?” said George sharply.

“Georgie,” gasped Rosa.

“I am engaged,” George rebuffed her, and turned to his guest. “I beg your pardon.”

Rosa did not stir.

Tylda’s husband perspired with shame and terror. “Here are—please—these proofs, letters which her husband wrote us and other papers intercepted—”

Rosa clutched at the door for support. “Show me them,” said George. He took the letters and feigned to read the first, but then crushed them all in his hand and gave them to Rosa. “There you are,” he smiled malevolently. “And now excuse me. And don’t go to the bank to draw anything out; you would go for nothing.”

Rosa retreated without a word, her face ashen.

“Well now, your business,” continued George hoarsely, closing the door.

“Yes, the prospects are—of the very best, and if there were capital—that is, of course, without interest—”

“Listen,” George interrupted unceremoniously. “I know that you are to blame; I am informed that you are not provident or—businesslike—”

“I would do my best,” stammered Tylda’s husband,

gazing at him with pleading, doglike eyes, from which George turned away.

"How can I put any confidence in you?" he asked, shrugging his shoulders.

"I assure you—that I would value your confidence—and all that is possible—we have children, brother-in-law."

A terrible, intense, embarrassing feeling of sympathy wrung George's heart. "Come in a year's time," he finished, holding on to the last fragment of his shattered will.

"In a year's time— O God—" groaned Tylda's husband, and his pale eyes filled with tears.

"Good-bye," said George, extending his hand.

Tylda's husband did not see the proffered hand. He made for the door and stumbled over a chair, groping vainly for the door-knob. "Good-bye," he said in a broken voice at the door, "and—thank you."

George was alone. A sweat of intense weakness burst out on his forehead. He arranged the papers on his table once more and called the landlady; when she arrived he was pacing the room with both hands pressed to his heart; he forgot what he wanted her for.

"Stop," he cried, as she was going out, "if today, tomorrow, or at any time my sister Rosa comes, tell her that I am not well and that . . . I would rather not see anyone."

Then he stretched himself on his sofa, fixing his eyes on a new spider's web freshly spun in the corner above his head.

PATIENCE

By GRAZIA DELEDDA

(Italian)

IT was October.

Leaning on, or rather having clambered up the reddish wall of the vineyard, the student and journalist, Lixia, gazed at the harsh and melancholy landscape, the memory of which had several times awakened in him pangs of homesickness.

It was the edge of a high plain covered with brush, in the midst of whose green depth was traced a yellowish road, broad but steep; reddish rocks loomed up, mottled with rusty moss. The sky, of an ashy blue, seemed even clearer above the dark line of the brush which was cut short at the horizon. Only a skylark's cry broke in upon the silence of the landscape, and only a little cloud, white and thin as a feather, broke the solitude of the horizon; it seemed that the lark, a little troubled and unhappy, uttered its cry to the cloud; and that the cloud had stayed its solitary and wearisome course to hear the lark.

Lixia gazed and he, too, became depressed. He felt a traitorous drowsiness enwrap his mind; it seemed to him that the motionless shadow of the fig tree on the dull red wall—a heavy and numbing shadow—had entered into his consciousness.

"What a melancholy, unpleasant country Sardinia is!" he thought.

"Even the clouds and the birds here are disheartened. While all the world moves and travels on, she alone, a dead island, lies alone. And what is not yet dead is in its death agony, like this vineyard here of my father's. This vineyard, which alone is alive in this wild heath, is dying of phyloxera. Next year there will be only the walls and this fig tree, if, indeed, they will be here. And I shall not be able to replant it, our vineyard! How could I? Are vineyards my business? But who is this man? Ah, Uncle Pascale. Now, indeed, the landscape is completed by his sad, hard face. He looks like a man of rusty iron, this old fellow. If I were a symbolic painter, I should paint this old man, just as he is, between two clumps of broom, beside a bloody rock, under a lowering sky, and call it Sardinia."

The broom seller advanced slowly, cutting the smaller bushes here and there; as he drew near, the student distinctly heard a groan, a repressed cough, sounding more within the chest than on the lips of the old man.

Uncle Pascale perhaps had fever and was delirious, for when he had arrived exactly under the little knoll on which the wall of the vineyard climbed, Lixia heard him talking vaguely, like a sleepwalker.

"Maria Annica," said the old broom seller, gently reproachful, "why did you do that? Didn't you know

that he was a rich man? See there, be still! Where is the wallet? Ah, what shall I do, my silver St. Francis? Pascaleddu, golden lamb, don't torment me like this . . ."

"Uncle Pascale!" called the student.

The old man, bent to cut a bush of broom with a little sickle, rose as if waking from sleep, and put his hand over his sunken eyes.

"Who are you, soul from purgatory?"

"Don't you see me? No, I am a soul from hell."

"Ah, are you the son of Batore Lixia? God bless you, my soul; I no longer see, you know. You look like a cloud to me."

"I am gathering broom straw. Are you, indeed, a doctor?" asked the old man with increasing respect.

"Not yet. What do you do with those brooms?"

The old man groaned and coughed convulsively, and answered with difficulty, humble and almost fearful:

"I take them to Nuoro, where I sell them."

"Every day?"

"Oh, no! When I was strong, yes; when I was twenty years old, or thirty. But now—"

He made a gesture as if to indicate a point more in time and space.

"How old are you now, Uncle Pascale?"

"Eighty—no, sixty-nine—wait! more—"

"Seventy-nine?"

"Yes, I lack only one of ninety."

"Enough. You mean that you are nearer a hundred

than twenty, don't you? Have you always been a broom maker?"

"Yes. But tell me, is it true that you are employed in the King's Court?"

"Not yet, Uncle Pascale! Perhaps in time. With whom do you live? It seems to me that you are sick."

"Sick! Sick! Very sick, son of my heart! Ah, that cough! It seems to me that here, between the chest and the throat, there is a saw which works, works without stopping. I knew your father, you know. He was a man who did good—oh—that cough—"

"But why don't you take something, Uncle Pascale?" asked Lixia, in whom the old man aroused pity and disgust.

"And what do you want me to take? I have tried the medal of St. Pascal; I have tried boiled mullein, poultices of flax—I've tried everything— But do you want to know what it is? It is death coming—"

"With whom do you live?" repeated the student journalist, jumping up to a seat on the wall.

The old broom maker began to interest him; he began to see in him the most typical representative of an unknown race. And yet how many times, before leaving for his studies and during vacation, had he not seen the old broom maker and a hundred, a thousand, other representatives of that race to which he himself belonged?

"How many years have you been making brooms?"

"For many, many years I told you!" answered the old man, repeating that vague gesture which hinted at measureless space-time. "I was ten years old the first time I went to Nuoro to sell brooms. My father was also a broom maker; and my son, too. One time, tired of always going and coming afoot, he threw a lasso on a horse which was grazing in a *tanca*, and got up on its back. Well, two carabinieri who had gone to look for a bandit met him. "Have you stolen that horse?" they said to him. He protested. But the two carabinieri, who were perhaps afraid to meet the bandit, took my son, tied him, and carried him off to jail."

"But you are malicious, Uncle Pascale!" observed Lixia.

But the old man coughed with his eyes out of their sockets and his beard bathed with threads of bloody foam, and did not hear the student's observation. When the cough passed, he began to talk again, still standing straight under the wall, upright, with his little scythe in his hand like an image of Death.

"My silver St. Francis, this devilish cough! Yes, my son dies in jail where he stayed to finish his sentence. Enough; he left me two children."

"What, he was married?"

"He was a widower. Well, two children; a boy and a girl. The boy went away with a wandering lock-

smith and I never saw him any more. The girl, Maria Annica, went to be a servant in the mayor's house. Do you know him, Marcu Virdis? Eh, do you know him, that rich man?"

"Eh, the devil! He's my uncle! Well?"

"Well, be patient. The girl was a silver-palm-tree. She was the light of my eyes. But she was not much good. She had a child by her master. But didn't she know that Marcu Virdis was a rich man? That he couldn't marry her? My silver St. Francis, be patient! God will have pardoned her, as I shall pardon her."

"Where is she now? Ah, it seems to me that I have heard that story! She is dead, isn't she?"

"She is dead."

"And the child?"

"He stays with me: but he is a big rascal! A little devil! He doesn't want to work, nor help me, nothing! Well, patience. My greatest worry is the thought of what will become of that creature. What will become of him, without relatives, poor and alone!"

"Uncle Pascale," said Lixia as if inspired. "Don't give it a thought! The world moves. Across the sea, on the Continent, men wish to become all equal; within twenty or thirty years, perhaps sooner, there will no longer be rich or poor; that is, all men will work and all will have enough to live comfortably. Even here, in Sardinia, this law will arrive. Don't give yourself worry about your grandson; when he gets old he will not drag himself, like you, over wild

heaths, at the risk of dying in the desert and being eaten by crows."

The old man listened; he shook his head sadly and groaned, checking a new burst of coughing which made his chest heave.

"Have patience," continued Lixia, with increasing ardor in his rôle of prophet. "Times will change. In the whole world, and finally even in Sardinia, there will be no more poor, no more criminals, no more who envy others, no more cheats like my uncle Virdis, no more carabinieri, no more children who will make unhappy old men die in despair. Here where the broom is growing, in these desolate fields, well, you see, even here vineyards will be seen budding, and orchards, and folds—"

"*Ebbene*, patience," the old broom seller broke in. "You mean that the vines and the orchards and the sheepfolds will belong to the rich; the poor will never have anything, no longer even the broom then! My silver St. Francis—"

He began to cough again.

From the top of the dull red wall the student threw out his arms and looked in desperation at the sky.

"They cannot even understand; they are not even human beings!" he exclaimed.

"Won't you give me something?" finally asked the broom seller.

But Lixia, faithful to his principles, refused him an alms, and in revenge the old man thought:

"That boy is crazy."

THE BLACK BULL

By PIERRE DOMINIQUE

(French)

HEAVY black clouds were gathering in the heavens, resembling a swarm of eagles. In the middle of the night the storm broke out. Was it an electrical storm or just an omen of the anger of God? The streaks of lightning pierced the heavens with green lights, and the thunder emptied its chariot of invisible stones with a great crash.

Suddenly the rain ceased; the wind, which was coming from the east, dispersed the clouds. Every one went out of doors both man and beast, to enjoy the fresh, peaceful atmosphere.

Just then, the church bells tolled a rustic angelus, which was taken up in the valley by one church after the other. The little children played in the warm sunshine like puppies.

The women scolded them, and, after calling to the cattle, returned to their threshold, to gossip and joke. The goats came out from under the chestnut trees, thinner than usual and with their fleece covered with drops of rain; the pigs, grunting, played around their trough, with the looks of famished boars, bewildered

and without malice. Meanwhile the night, that mother of rest, descended slowly upon the little village.

Old Pero and I loved the beginning of the night, when all human sounds die away, one after the other. We crossed the shadows just as they were falling before a row of elm trees planted in back of the church. A delightful spot for meditation and philosophical discussions, after the children had gone to bed. To our regret, some youngsters still remained. They were playing about and all of a sudden they cried out with terror, running hither and thither. We looked about also and were likewise struck with fear.

"The priest—the priest," shouted the youngsters, their animated faces flushed from pleasure, excitement and panic. And the women, hearing the commotion, called from their thresholds:

"Come here! Will you come here, you brats!"

I turned toward Pero, who remained motionless, but who showed a very apparent desire to run away, just like the children.

There were slamming of doors, galloping, and this unknown thing that roamed between the church and the elm trees.

"Ah!" Pero whispered, "it is Abbé Mathieu, the old priest of the country, who died five years ago."

To which I replied in a mocking voice:

"Oh! that will be something to see! Let's go, old man, and see for ourselves."

The children had already deserted us, and most

probably had forgotten all about this strange apparition, as soon as their warm soup was served.

There was only a handful of people left in the village, and they listened to all kinds of tales relating to the late priest, and the old women offered up prayers, with three fingers bent back, to stave off the evil spirits. We proceeded farther. Night was approaching, and the square was empty. Suddenly a black form appeared, which seemed to be crouching under the elm trees, against the breast-wall. In drawing nearer, we saw that it was a bull, with outstretched head, but making scarcely any movements or sounds. He was marked very plainly on the forehead with a white star, and, according to the habits of these beasts, was lying on one side. A white foam was exuding from his snout.

My companion shook his head. "It may be him," he said.

Then Pero crossed himself and uttered something in a low and respectful tone. The beast seemed to utter a long sigh, then straightened out his forelegs, stood up and slowly ambled away. We watched him climb as far as the hill. Then, the bull lowered his head, dug his hoofs in the ground, stiffened out his tail and suddenly turned about in the direction of the village, roaring.

"It may be," said my companion, "that this bull is Abbé Mathieu. Why not? First, because he is black. Moreover, he is marked with a white star on his fore-

head, and he understands the sign of the cross. And, lastly, I do not recognize him, and the Lord only knows that I know all the bulls in this country. Furthermore, the Abbé had in his lifetime something about him which resembled this strong savage beast of male appearance, this leader of herds, with his strong head, muscular neck, strong legs, quick gait and keen eyes."

He looked at me.

"That is what I mean," he said, and added: "You don't believe it, do you?"

"No, I have no idea of putting any faith in the idea that this dead priest has returned on earth in the form of a beast, just to parade before his parishioners. First of all, Pero, why should this brave priest come back?"

"Who can guess that?" Pero replied, shaking his head. "Maybe to keep an eye on his descendants and also to preserve his house."

At this moment, some one passed near us. It was a man, about forty-five or fifty years old. He was dragging his feet and came from one of the last houses in the village. He was walking in the direction of the café. His movements were jerky, and he was mumbling to himself and had a strong smell of liquor about him. He was poorly clad; his vest was too large and his trousers too long.

"Oh! it is you, Tonio," my companion exclaimed.

"Oh!" Tonio replied, stopping suddenly and almost losing his balance. "Who are you, and all the others?"

He lighted a match in order to see us more plainly and we noticed his flushed, flabby face and dull eyes.

"Where are you going?"

Tonio only laughed, blew out the match and began to search awkwardly in his pockets. He pulled out a large roll of bills, which he showed to us in the moonlight. With dirty fingers, he started counting, one, two, three, four, five and so on until he had counted up to twenty.

"Twenty," he said, "twenty thousand," and turning his hilarious idiotic face toward us he said, "I sold my uncle's house to Barbonne—yes to Barbonne himself—and he paid cash for it," he added, fingering the roll. "Look for yourself. Twenty thousand. Twenty thousand francs."

"Oh!" Pero replied, "your uncle's house—the house which belonged to your grandfather and the house where all of your ancestors have died,—oh! Tonio, for shame!"

"Nonsense, leave me alone," was Tonio's reply. "Do you realize what twenty thousand francs are? Twenty thousand francs which are going to double themselves—yes, and this very evening," and he burst out laughing.

Some one enquired, "And how?"

"I am going to gamble."

"Oh! you will not do that—you will not gamble with your own bread, Tonio."

"Dunce that you are! I am going to gamble

with some idiots. And the Devil take me if I have not forty thousand francs before the day is ended! Yes, yes," he continued, excitedly, "by all that is holy, forty thousand francs. Ah! but you will have to be more shrewd than Tonio himself—with the Devil himself in front of me, I would win."

He shouted this and we watched him staggering along in the moonlight, with his fortune of twenty thousand francs clutched in his unsteady hand. Pero was silent and thoughtful, and, sighing, put his hand on the shoulder of the drunkard saying:

"Don't go there, Tonio, I beg of you, in the name—"

"In the name of who?—"

"In the name of your poor uncle, you miserable wretch—"

"My uncle? for all I care he can go to—"

Pero turned away in disgust.

Suddenly cries of "Are you coming? Come on; we are waiting for you," came from the open café door.

"Here I am," cried the drunkard. "Do you hear them?" he asked, turning toward us. "They are just waiting to be skinned." And he disappeared then into the warm stuffy hall of the café, from which came shouts and coarse jesting.

We remained alone, Pero and myself, facing the church, at the edge of the square, lighted by the moon.

"There," said Pero, "that is what happens to descendants of giants. Abbé Mathieu, the uncle of that

imbecile who has just gone by, was a man who had two bodies; they don't exist in our times. Aunt Saveria, who was his mother, related this story for thirty years or more, how the doctor had made the diagnosis that she was to give birth to twins, but only one was born, and he was to be the future Abbé Mathieu. At birth this infant weighed twelve pounds and had two molar teeth."

I started to laugh and asked if he had not been born with a Bible and priest's robe as well, but Pero went on talking more seriously than ever.

"I tell you that Abbé Mathieu had two bodies. He was five feet six inches in height, weighed two hundred and forty pounds and had a broad hairy chest like a bear. He had a short stocky neck, and large flat feet and powerful hands, strong enough to bend a horse-shoe. I have already spoken of his mentality. As a priest, he knew how to say all the different masses and give all the benedictions. One day he took upon himself all the duties of the bishop as well, and governed the canton for ten years, and the parish for twenty years. He refused to pay the tax to the Republic and likewise refused to allow his parishioners to pay it either. They were under his jurisdiction, as he represented both church and state. The old Abbé knew how to eat well, and to drink well also, he could make a good speech, could plow, and converse in Tuscan and brew wine. He could do all of these things, longer, quicker, and better than any one else." Pero

had a sad expression, and raising his arms above his head, he exclaimed, "Nothing seemed to be able to vanquish him, and still his own nephew destroyed him.

"His nephew, whom you saw just a while ago—a good-for-nothing, like God sends sometimes to heroes in order to test them—is only half man, according to my way of thinking. He never works in the vineyards, nor tends the flock, and has never been known to get a single vote at election time. He runs after the women, yes, goes to balls, smokes, not a pipe like the *fiori*, but cigarettes from the Orient, if you please. His clothes are always extreme as to cut and he wears patent leather shoes, a derby hat and plays the accordion, with which he serenades the ladies. And what an absinthe drinker! And how crazy he is about cards! While the Abbé says a mass, Tonio gambles the price at cards, and loses every time. At noon he drinks a cask of wine and in the evening he eats quantities of black bread.

"What is the good of burials, baptisms, marriages, and reaping the harvest when there is a basket with a hole in it at home, like this one, this spendthrift of a Tonio? But all this would have been nothing if this rascal had not taken advantage of a woman, while her husband was in France.

"Yes, I understand that might happen to any one, who has not already taken advantage of a woman, even a married woman. But you must grant that circumstances alter cases, and these affairs of Tonio were not

only state offences, but also involved two families—but I agree with you that others have gotten themselves out of worse scrapes than these, just by using their brains and a bit of patience—but do you know all that Tonio was capable of doing? Run away!—”

Pero threw up his arms, drooped his head and remained motionless for a moment.

“Yes, escaping to the Continent, abandoning the woman and the child, and leaving the Abbé more at a loss than a sheep in a bramble of thorns. I refuse to relate what followed, but the Abbé, after making the necessary arrangements, took refuge, with the mother and child, in a fortified house, just above the river, which had formerly served as a fortress during the Turkish invasion. And there he remained for sixty days like an old eagle. You remember that house, the one that his nephew sold this morning, like he sold everything else.

“No one ever knew if God heard the prayers of the old Abbé from his refuge; that was an affair between them. But one day the old priest left the fortress. He had aged, and having retired from all political obligations, declared that, from now on, he would consecrate his life wholly to God; therefore he would preach any sermon for his parishioners with the exception of one, that pertaining to the pardon of those who had tried to injure him, so that they could not consider themselves pardoned for their malice toward him.

“No one had dreamt of being pardoned. Inasmuch as the uncle had done everything in his power, as I have just told you—they wanted the nephew, and, as the nephew had fled, they turned upon the uncle, thinking to avenge themselves on him, and make him give his quart of blood, just like a young person, and maybe even better.

“The Abbé was conscious of this feeling of hate which surrounded him, and realized that the slightest error on his part might cause a drama. There was no one, however, in all the canton with the patience and strength of character that he possessed. One day at high mass his enemies called to him to come out if he dared. He turned about, saying—

“ ‘In a little while. Permit me to finish the mass.’ But when he appeared armed, his adversaries had fled. Another time, when he was still in the vestry-room, they assailed him again. Hearing the commotion, he appeared, preceded by the children of the choir, who carried the arms. He took the gun from one of them and placed it upright next to the altar:

“ ‘Here is the Father,’ he said.

“His voice rang out clearly throughout the church. Then placing the pistol on the right hand side of the altar:

“ ‘Here is the Son—’

“Then, lengthening his stiletto before the tabernacle:

“ ‘Here is the Holy Ghost—’

"And he concluded, in a voice dignified and at the same time warlike:

" 'My dear brothers, honor, with me, the Holy Trinity.'

"The Trinity, before which one hesitates. It was in this manner, that the Abbé defended the woman and child for three years—just until the time when the Devil called them both away—in the very same week. All were now dead, excepting this fool Tonio. The Abbé, in spite of his seventieth year, still had black hair; it seemed as if he could not die.

"They buried him, nevertheless," I remarked.

"Yes," replied my companion, "he is dead. But did you see him die a natural death? He was struck on the terrace of his house one day, by lightning, Monsieur. The lightning left a mark on his skin, that the shepherds of Rutili knew how to decipher; it indicated the friendship and anger of God, maybe as a chastisement for some former sins. The Abbé was a man who would have neither accepted or demanded it, and it is for this reason that he appears in the form of an animal on the spot where his heroic soul once reigned."

My companion bowed his head in reverence. The bellowing of the bull died away near the cemetery.

"Do you hear that?" Pero sighed. "He is always there."

Just at that moment the door of the cabaret opened quickly. A glaring light invaded the square. Sounds of laughter and jeering were heard.

"It was not for long," my companion said, "before—"

Four or five black forms appeared and disappeared. Their movements were quick and silent, and in a very short time they had lost themselves in the shadows, and a door gave a bang. There remained but one who came near to us, groaning and wailing like a child.

It was Tonio.

Yes, Tonio. He staggered forward, his head drooping, and he seemed even smaller than usual. He failed to notice us, mumbling to himself, between hiccoughs, something about money and cards. Fearing some kind of trouble, we went out to meet him.

"What is the matter?"

"Oh!" Tonio replied, "I have had bad luck. I have lost—"

"How much?"

"Everything," he replied in a small shrill voice, shaking his pockets in a comical fashion. "Everything—Oh!" snapping his fingers, he said, "they did not even leave me that much."

"What—twenty thousand francs!"

"I played double or quits five times in succession."

Pero was dumbfounded, exclaiming:

"What do you think of that!"

And Pero remembered the old house, in the form of a tower, where Tonio's uncle had died, the oblong panelled rooms, the chests, the trough, the press, the salted meats hung on the beams, and the olive grove, the mill, the chestnut trees, the old garden, and, also, that large black form of the Abbé with his prophetic gestures when he said mass, and, when he placed his arms on the altar, it seemed as though he was talking to a visible God, almost on equal terms, with deference, but with no sign of submission.

"What do you know about that!" Pero repeated a second time.

Suddenly, before having time to answer him, we saw a large black form approaching us; then there were mad snorts.

"What can that be?" Tonio asked in a hoarse voice, and showing a desire to run away.

My companion trembled, because he recognized the bull, and I did also—that horned beast which we encountered a short while ago.

"Oh! my friend," Pero uttered, "what do you mean? It is— It is—"

The beast bellowed, dug its hoofs into the ground, and straightened out its neck.

"It is—a bull," I said in my turn.

"Yes," the gambler replied, "a bull—well, what is it doing here? One can't even find peace in the square. Wait, just wait until I get hold of you!"

He bent over slightly, almost losing his balance so that he had to steady himself with his hands when he picked up a stone, grumbling.

"Don't hit him," Pero cried, "don't, you bad wretch!"

"Why not?" Tonio asked.

And the smell of liquor from his breath was so strong that we stepped aside a few steps. Tonio started to laugh, and glared about with the fixed stare of an irritated absinthe drinker.

"Oh, you idiots, you think that is my uncle, do you? You believe that nonsense, do you, about his returning? Go along, you fools, and pry into his grave and see if you do not find all of his old bones—"

And waving his flint, he added:

"That beast is nothing more than the son of a cow."

Then he approached the black monster.

"Be careful, Tonio," warned my companion.

But he paid no heed, remaining obstinate and sneering.

"Oh, bull," Tonio cried, leaning his head quite close to that of the beast. "What are you looking for here? Some hay? Well, my friend, I have not the means to buy you any. I am poor, can't you see that?"

Comically he turned his pockets inside out. The bull did not budge, just glared at him, lowering his head further and further.

Pero and I, taking note of the two sharp ends of the

bull's horns, cried to Tonio: "Do be careful, I beg of you."

"Be careful of what?" the drunkard replied. "What does that beast want? Go away beast, go away, run away!"

And with that he hit the bull with a stone; a stream of silvery foam oozed from its mouth, as the stone hit it just above the nostrils. Tonio began to laugh.

But not for very long. Because the bull who had not flinched under the blow, suddenly gave a furious snort, relaxing the entire bulk of its weight and waving its horned head from side to side. The drunkard uttered a sudden cry, and seemed to rise straight up in the air, into the clear night, like an Ascension, and then, all of a sudden, he fell with a thump back upon the ground, a rag torn into shreds, trampled upon and rendered dumb and lifeless. With this, the beast started away with a furious gallop and we ran to the aid of Tonio.

We plunged our hands into warm blood and stroked Tonio's face which was all covered with a cold sweat. The odor of sickening blood arose. And then the old Saveria appeared from out of the darkness, exclaiming in a low trembling voice:

"I saw it—I saw it— A punishment of God! A punishment of God!"

And she added in a louder voice, clutching her cheeks:

"Christians! what one must see these days!"

And at the far end of the square, a low bellowing was heard, there was a note of sadness about it, and the large shadow of the animal disappeared between the graves.

And as was the custom, the old woman began to wail:

"Aiuto! Aiuto! Una disgrazia! Help! Help! A great disaster!"

THE BARTENDER

By HENRI DUVERNOIS

(French)

YOUNG FREDERICK ARMOISIN composed music; hence was often called upon by his fellow composers to play their works.

He played the piano like so many other composers, badly and almost imperceptibly.

One day, after a bountiful repast at a little suburban café, seated at the antiquated piano, he proceeded to extract from the instrument such discordant notes, so full of melancholy, that even he was astonished.

"Can't you play something a little more jolly," Pec-teur, his friend, demanded.

Frederick looked at him disdainfully and replied: "No, if you want something in harmony with your taste, drop a coin into the mechanical piano and you can get what you want."

A lively discussion ensued and, in disgust, Frederick left, slamming the door. The headwaiter ran after him saying: "Please settle your bill. Every one of you owes forty-five francs."

Having received this, the headwaiter spoke up again, "The tip is not included."

Frederick replied, "I'll give you a tip when the service is as it ought to be."

"Nobody ever complained before."

"I know what I am saying," retorted Frederick.

"I heard you, but people make complaints about service an excuse when they either do not want to give a tip or cannot afford to! Which of these two applies to you makes no difference to me because I will not bother with you and hope you'll never come back. Such a fellow."

Frederick shrugged his shoulders and left as light heartedly as a fellow could whose entire fortune consisted of a ten and a five franc note. Neither of these was of any value because in days of prosperity, as a joke, he had torn off the numbers.

In view of the depleted state of his finances, he decided that the two-hour walk back to his rooms in town was unavoidable, even though it was drizzling.

On the way he passed a telegraph office which seemed to be calling to him to enter. Several messages were satisfactory in expressing his sentiments but were not in conformity with the size of his purse, because of their length. "Sinmoir. Rouen." This was the telegraphic address of his father. "Send money immediately, hungry, love Frederick." On reading it again he decided, for economy sake, to omit the word "love." The operator, quite angry, because of his procrastination in deciding the number of words to be sent, read the message, hesitated and said, "Oh, keep

your money. I have a heart even though I'm poor. I'll advance you the money to pay for the message because it seems most urgent." Frederick blushed and thanked her. She resumed her novel which had less touching situations than the one she had just witnessed.

Exhausted after traversing an endless succession of suburbs, he returned at last to his lodging in an obscure part of Paris. It was the time of day when everybody on the seven floors, which he needs must pass to reach his own, was preparing the evening meal. At the first landing he inhaled the aroma of a well prepared soup, at the second a smell of stewed rabbit greeted his nostrils and so on up to the sixth where the cabbage soup sent forth unmistakable odors. Reaching his own floor only a smell of rancid soap could be detected.

Under his door, his eyes encountered an envelope with the familiar writing of his mother.

He opened it cautiously, looking in vain for a check. She had written thus:

MY DEAR BOY:

I insist upon your immediate return. I cannot do anything more for you because all of my savings have already been sent. My jewelry was sold secretly, three months ago, in order to send you money. Your father is very angry because Mr. Jullevin of Paris has told one of our clerks that you have no talent for music and will never succeed. I have read the biographies of many composers and found that none had been successful at your age. So many of them became ill be-

cause they didn't have enough to eat, and this is why I worry about you. Just realize what hardships you must endure in order to achieve a doubtful success. There are enough celebrated composers without you. Come home and swallow your false pride.

Your father does not trust you to buy a ticket to come back because in the past the money we sent for this purpose was spent elsewhere, so we will arrange for your return ticket from here. Come back soon, I have faith in you.

MOTHER.

"Have you anything for me?" he demanded of the concierge.

"No, sir, only your bill."

"Keep it."

"I will dine on a roll," said Frederick to himself, "but this evening I am going back to Cosecantes' café where goose liver, roast beef, Russian salad and champagne are to be had. I will return to Rouen only when I am crowned with laurels and married."

What was it that held him in Paris? It was Art and also Lily Cosecante. She fascinated him and reciprocated by understanding him better than any one else. He stretched himself on his bed, a reminder of provincial comfort, a reminder of home which every piece of furniture seemed to possess, but which did not prevent his falling asleep. He woke up at ten o'clock and, whistling, pulled out his dinner coat and picked out a stiffly starched shirt from the trunk which served also as a dresser.

By the light of a candle reflected on a mirror he

noticed, to his dismay, that his tie was frayed. With the care of a hairdresser, arranging a fringe of hair, he clipped some threads, but only made matters worse. He tried to tie a knot, hoping to hide the frayed edge, but without success. Disgusted, he seized his hat, threw his coat across one arm and went back to the concierge.

"M. Quandéavalle, you are always ready to do a fellow a favor. I have just torn my tie and am in hard luck because I am to play at a recital tonight before the President of our Republic. Every haberdashery is closed at this time of night."

"Oh, don't worry," said the concierge, much impressed. "I'll lend you one of mine but must say that they are white and of the kind with ready-made tie."

"That might still be proper," replied Frederick. "Listen, I have seen men wearing dinner coats and white ties. Every one is entitled to his own ideas on such a subject. The haberdashery on the corner may still be open. One need only walk across the court."

They found the proprietor at work on his books. When the unexpected customers entered he hastily put away his money and looked suspiciously at the intruders. Having satisfied himself that they were not thieves he asked their names and their wants.

"If you were not neighbors I wouldn't bother about you. When my store is closed, it is so to all the world." He looked at the torn cravat with the eye of an expert and, like a doctor giving his opinion after a thor-

ough examination of a patient, said, "The condition of this tie is bad but I still have hope of being able to do something with it. Come along, we will fix you up."

"Look, here is a tie," pulling out one from his showcase, "which will last for five years if you take care of it. It only costs twenty francs."

"Haven't you a cheaper one?" Frederick asked.

"How much do you want to pay?"

"Oh, about eight francs."

"You are lucky. I have one here which would not suit everybody. Since you are an artist, however, it is just the thing for you. Made of *moiré* with a little white fringe to give it style. You can have it at your price."

"That's a bargain," the concierge said.

"All right, I'll take it," said Frederick, trying to tie it in such a way as to hide the white fringe.

"Don't hide the fringe, it's the best part of the tie," said the proprietor.

Having spent all of his money, Frederick walked briskly to the home of the Cosecantes near the Porte Champerret.

Lily, quite happy, said "I've been waiting for you. When my father heard you were coming he asked about you. He is very fond of you, but mother does not trust you. She is far more shrewd."

Mr. Cosecante was about five feet tall and almost

as broad. He was stockily built, bald and very reticent. He gave one the impression of a champion prize-fighter who had retired from the arena, after having gained a competence there.

"Hello, Mozart," he cried jovially. "Come have a drink with me. Our own brew. It's powerful, I warn you, but don't be afraid of it."

"Oh, I am not afraid of it, only give me a bite to eat with it. It's my custom."

"Take some cake," Cosecante replied. Frederick's eyes glistened after he had swallowed the liquor whose excellence he could not praise enough.

"Meet an old friend of mine," pointing to a stout individual lounging in a chair. "Mr. Frederick Armoisin, a disciple of modern music, meet Mr. Justin Barbier of the banking firm Aufflard and Barbier."

"Do you play?" asked the banker.

"No, I compose music," replied Frederick.

"But you play Brahms, do you not?"

"Sure."

"Fine, I'll ask you to play his music, when you dine with me shortly. Brahms inspires me."

"He doesn't know anything about it," interposed Lily, who had joined the group. "Mr. Armoisin is at work on a symphony and an opera."

"It will not be easy to sell those," Banker Barbier remarked.

"It may mean a wait of twenty years, but Armoisin has patience," exclaimed Lily's father.

Frederick saw the reflection of his unfashionable tie in the mirror and realized his poverty and inability to win her unless he prove himself to be more worldly and less of a dreamer. This attitude immediately won the approval of her father.

"All right, while I am awaiting fame as a composer, I'll take up banking to pass the time," Frederick exclaimed.

Mr. Barbier, the banker, replied indignantly, "Young man, a bank is not a loafing place. I get up every morning at five."

"When he goes hunting," Lily whispered.

"Mr. Armoisin," said her father, "I am pleased that you will have a real occupation in addition to your art. You risk nothing in having two strings to your bow. I know plenty of young people who take up art, music and literature as an excuse for work, and idle away their time from morn till night. Justin, you remember the little café where one could dine for a few pennies. You wrote poetry and I painted aquar-elles. At the same time however, you were an errand boy and I wrapped parcels for Rouderreau brothers. Those were happy days."

"Why does your father say all this?" Frederick asked Lily.

"Oh, they are just talking for your benefit."

"We had only one dress suit between us," Mr. Cosecante continued. "We were never in public at the same time, for that reason. People thought we were not on

good terms because one always asked to be invited without the other fellow, offering as an excuse that we saw enough of each other all day. The one who was not invited to dine was obliged to content himself with a cheap meal at the little corner café. One does not ask a young man nowadays who he is but what he has accomplished. The world divides occupations into two groups, honorable and dishonorable. This is the viewpoint of our day. In America, for example, a man, if his family has a good name and he has been educated, may be a bartender in the afternoon and yet be received in the best circles in the evening, if he puts on a dinner coat.

"I admire your father," Frederick said to Lily. "What he says is correct."

"He never speaks in vain," Lily replied, and asked, "Have you always loved me?"

"I have not had a change of heart."

"Well, let's be happy. Our marriage will please my father. Only I have a premonition."

"Doesn't he like music?" Frederick asked.

"Oh, yes, for fifteen minutes, and then it puts him to sleep. He says that it is not enough for one's life work because a little every evening suffices."

"Does he want me to enter his business?"

"Oh, no, it's too complicated, and one must have grown up in it."

"Well, he certainly does not want me to bury myself in my father's shop at Rouen."

"Oh, no, but you should decide to go there, and take me with you," Lily said.

"That suits me."

If Frederick's father had suggested that he should take a place in his establishment, Frederick would have rebelled; but coming from Lily the idea seemed worthy of consideration, especially since he was penniless.

"I will make an effort," said Frederick. "You will not have reason to complain before being proud of me."

"What a queer tie, you're wearing," Lily exclaimed.

"Oh, it's not very chic, but I have made a bet with our concierge to wear it for a month."

"Such a chap. Now, don't forget that I am trying to make you more practical. However, if you return home alone, they will make a martyr of me and compel me to marry the sort of man whom my mother would choose for me. Now, try to go into business, even if only for six months so that we can be married."

At four A.M. Pecteur, his friend, took Frederick by the arm and said: "Let's go and have a drink." Soon afterward Frederick found himself perched on a high stool in front of Tom's Bar.

"Two ports," Pecteur commanded.

Frederick greatly admired the dexterity with which Albert, the bartender, broke the eggshells and proceeded to mix their contents with port to make a cocktail. Albert was a good-looking, almost distinguished fellow, appearing very trim in his white coat. He

impressed one as being worthy of occupying a loftier position in the world. As Frederick looked at Albert, the remark made by Lily's father flashed across his mind, that a man, if well bred and educated, might in America be a bartender by day and be received at night in the best society by simply discarding his white jacket and putting on a dinner coat.

"Your job must be a difficult one to learn," said Frederick. "A physician who writes a prescription does not need to exercise more care than you do in mixing the ingredients of your drinks. Did you study medicine?"

"Yes, I began it, but family reverses compelled me to quit. I'm not sorry now, because I have made a success of tending bar. Whether one poisons people with drugs or liquor is just the same."

Suddenly, struck by the idea of becoming a bartender, Frederick asked, "Would it be very difficult for me to learn your profession? I know that it would interest me greatly."

"Now, look here, young fellow, a bar is no place to simply have a good time," the bartender replied unconsciously repeating Banker Barbier's statement which the latter had made to Frederick, earlier in the evening, at the home of Lily's father. "I need help during the rush hours after four in the afternoon. If you want the job, come back tomorrow. I've a white jacket to fit you. You'll get thirty francs, your dinner, and a percentage of the tips."

"All right, I'll come back ready to work."

"Are you insane?" his friend Pecteur asked Frederick. "Don't go too far in this joke. Imagine what your parents will say when they learn that you refused to go to work in their dry goods store and then wanted to learn to be a bartender."

Some days later Mr. Cosecante summoned Lily to his office and said: "Have you had any news about Frederick? Well, if not, I have had some and it's very bad."

Lily, without waiting to learn the nature of this news, proceeded to Frederick's lodgings. When informed by the concierge that he was out, she asked where he could be found. "At Tom's Bar on Avenue de l'Opéra. He's always there from four to eight every afternoon."

Hastening to the address, she found the space in front of the bar empty. Seating herself on one of the high stools she noticed how the bartender was teaching an assistant how to mix a cocktail.

"You are a fool. I've told you twenty times that a mere dash of Angostura Bitters is not a half glass. Why, a baby could comprehend that. You cut the lemon peels too thick, too. Cut them so you can look through them."

"Manhattan, please," Lily commanded. Even though she spoke in English, Frederick recognized her voice and raised his head, blushing.

"Oh, how terrible, you a bartender. Don't let me

ever see you again," Lily shouted, and dashed through the door.

"What's all the excitement?" said Albert, astonished.

"That, my friend," replied Frederick, "is prejudice with a capital P; it is snobbishness with a capital S; and egotism with a capital E. I am simply carrying out her father's idea and only learning to be a bartender because I love her. Her father said a man, if well bred and educated, could tend bar by day and be received in the best society at night, if he exchanged his white bartender's coat for a dinner coat. I'm sick of it, but at least I've learned how to make a good gin fizz. That will be a distraction in the evenings at home after ten minutes of music. All I ask is to be given my white bartender's jacket. It will serve to remind my children that they should avoid any one who preaches one thing and practices something different. Paris is full of traditions and if you want to be free, go into the country or to America."

THE LAW OF THE BORDER

By SERGEY GUSSIEV-ORENBURGSKY

(Russian)

THE village slept at peace, wrapped in the soft embrace of the night. The wide river, shimmering under the radiance of the Milky Way, gurgled lazily and drowsily in its hidden whirlpools. Beyond the river stretched the steppe, concealed in impenetrable darkness, breathing dreamily. All nature was sunk in deep slumber under the cool night. Only a solitary candle still glimmered in the small, three-windowed house of the Cossack under-officer, Kolodin. He sat with a book in his hands, not reading, however, but thinking, so immersed in his reverie that he had lost count of time, did not notice how his candle had burned down, nor hear the resounding gallop of a horse ridden at full speed through the sleepy street.

Suddenly warm arms encircled his neck, and the thin body of his twelve-year-old daughter clung to him.

"Papa! You are not asleep yet!"

He looked lovingly at the sweet, sleepy face of the girl whose hot cheek pressed closely against his own.

"Little Skinny! Why did you get up?"

"Oh—I've had a terrible dream! I dreamt that

you were at war, galloping at full speed and brandishing your sabre, and heads were flying off. It was terrible! Is it always like that in war?"

Kolodin had no time to answer his daughter. Hasty, running steps were heard somewhere near in the street, and a black, dishevelled head appeared in the open window.

"Ivan Stépanitch," said the head, gasping for breath, "come to the office! Quick!"

"What for?" asked Kolodin in surprise.

"The ataman has sent for you."

"In the middle of the night? What's up, anyway?"

The head had not yet recovered breath.

"A Kirghiz stole some horses from the drove, don't you see? The shepherd Grigoritch came running—with the news—oh, I am out of breath! Come quickly, Ivan Stépanitch! You are to be there right away, and I have still to go for Neudobny."

The head disappeared.

Kolodin rose reluctantly and began to dress.

"Go to sleep, Skinny dear!" he said to his daughter; "sleep without dreaming; you're too young to have dreams. Sleep, my little orphan! And I'll go. Why on earth they particularly need me, I can't see."

The ataman, a full-faced, thick-set man in felt boots and uniform coat thrown over his shoulders, sat at the table in the large dimly-lit office. Near him stood a tall blond Cossack by the name of Akimov. He was extremely thin, and for that reason was nick-

named Stick. Like the ataman, he was listening attentively to the booming speech of a broad-chested Cossack with a widespread, dishevelled red beard and round, bulging eyes, who was gesturing wildly.

"I said to him, to Mishka, I mean," he was shouting in a deep bass voice, "Why is it, I said to him, that the horses are restless? Maybe a wolf is lurking about. And at that moment Udavka and Barin suddenly jumped up, tore off and started barking—then we heard—stamp—stamp—horses' hoofs—some one galloping across the steppe. We rushed here—we rushed there—we jumped on our horses—"

"Here's Ivan Stépanitch," said the ataman, rising to greet Kolodin.

"Well, it's been quite a little time since we've seen each other." Kolodin shook hands with everybody. "How are you? What do you need of my old bones?"

"We're in trouble," replied the ataman; "some horses have been stolen."

"We rushed here—we rushed there—" Grigoritch was too excited to let any one else tell his tale. "Now, look here, Ivan Stépanitch, you've spent all your life in the steppes; tell me, don't you agree that no horses of ours can catch a Kirghiz racer? We were in a hurry, too; and, besides, how could we choose the horses in the dark? We bridled the first ones, got our guns and galloped across the steppe at random."

He threw up his hands with an air of despair.

"We galloped in one direction and then in another.

Besides, we could hardly manage our horses; they wanted to go back to the drove, and kept on turning around. By that time we'd lost all the trace of the Kirghiz."

"How many did he drive away?"

"Who can tell? Looks like at least two."

"It's a misfortune, to be sure," said Kolodin. "But where do I come in? What did you call me for?"

"Do us a favour, Ivan Stépanitch," said the ataman. "You are like an old priairie wolf. It's not for nothing you have earned the rank of under-officer and got a cross for bravery. You have wandered all over the steppe, you know every trail and mouse-track, and all the wiles of beast or bird. You must have hunted down more than one Kirghiz during the time you were in the service."

"I've had pretty nearly all kinds of experience, I guess, but what of it?"

"And you know this steppe very well. Won't you go and track the thief before he has time to reach his bandit village? Probably you can trail and catch him. Render this service to the community."

Kolodin pondered for a while, and then said: "All right. Who'll come with me?"

"Fedor Grigoritch here, and Stick."

"Don't be insulting, your Honour," said Akimov.

"Don't get touchy," laughed the ataman, "everybody calls you that. I wonder that some storm hasn't broken you in two. I have also sent for Neudobny,"

he added, turning to Kolodin; "I guess it's he coming now."

An awkward, short, broadly-built Cossack entered the room. His head, with a black pointed beard, was drawn down into his shoulders, and his arms and legs were bowed like carriage shafts.

The ataman turned to him: "See here, get your gun and be off to the steppe. This is your chief," he pointed to Kolodin. "Get yourselves ready, and God be with you!"

An hour later four horsemen were riding out of the village and following the high bank of the river.

The night was as black as ink. Only the river faintly reflected the silvery gleam of the Milky Way.

"Be easy on the horses," Kolodin was saying. "If a horse is not forced at the start, but permitted to go at a slow pace until he gets going, then one can ride him a hundred miles. Meanwhile, let's decide, friends, where we shall go."

"That's true," said Grigoritch; "where shall we go?"

"In what direction did the Kirghiz go?" asked Stick.

"Westward, towards the marshy corner, as they call it."

"You mean towards the village of Nikolævsky?"

"Here is the point: would a Kirghiz go towards a Russian village? He might easily run up against a Cossack, who would quickly guess that the horses were stolen."

"Then he has fooled us; the rascal has made a false track!"

"Certainly he has fooled us. He leads us astray, and then turns off another way."

"That's a problem!"

"What do you think, Neudobny?" asked Stick.

"I'll follow the rest," answered Neudobny in an unconcerned manner; "it's all the same to me."

This angered Stick.

"You fool!"

"But I don't know the steppe."

"What kind of Cossack are you, then?"

"Stop, friends," said Kolodin, "don't quarrel; there are more important things to do. I reason it this way: the village of Nikolævsky is to our right?"

"Yes."

"The Kirghiz would not go there. To the left is that settlement the emigrants from Central Russia established lately. So what he must do is to go to the Kirghiz land which wedges in between these two settlements. From there, through Karass, he will make for the Black River, because once he is beyond the river he is free to go to the end of the world. If we do not catch him before he reaches the Black River, we might as well hunt the winds—he will be safe."

"But the Black River is wide."

"One can ford it in two places. When we come to Karass, we'll see to which ford we had better go."

While thus discussing they crossed the bridge.

"Well," said Kolodin, "our horses have been walked enough. Let's go! Hey, get up, there!"

"Hey, get up!"

The pursuit started.

The sound of horses on the ground filled the steppe. A night bird silently brushed the riders and was swallowed up in the darkness. A breath of fresh moisture-laden air came from the river, but the Cossacks soon left the river behind as they plunged into the heart of the steppe. The well-built figure of Kolodin was silhouetted ahead of the others. Stick rose on his horse like a fantastically thin shadow. Grigoritch bent towards the saddle-bow as though trying to distinguish the road. And Neudobny jounced in the saddle as if he were dancing some awkward jig.

The mysterious darkness seemed to start fearfully at the sound of the galloping horses.

"I used to gallop across the steppe on such nights quite often," Kolodin said, drawing in deeply the freshness of the night. "The colonel used to send me to track the Start. I almost shot a scout once."

"Did he run away?"

"While we were mounting our horses he suddenly disappeared, seemed to fall into a ravine."

"I wouldn't have let him get away," affirmed Grigoritch with assurance.

The other men laughed.

"How did you let this one escape today, then?"

"I had no gun at hand—that was my bad luck! I have a charmed bullet in my gun. Old Karachikha put a spell on it, over water. I would have laid him out, the dog, on the spot! Well, I'll get my chance yet."

The Milky Way was fading while, in the east, the dawn was breaking. It soon flamed forth, filling the steppe with cool waves of gay morning light.

Sun-rays were spreading out in all directions over the horizon when the pursuit reached Karass.

It was a remote, deserted spot.

A small creek, beginning no one knew where and disappearing no one knew whither, wound along a mound. Its banks seemed to whisper mysteriously to the free wind of the steppes, blowing in soft gusts from beyond the mound.

Kolodin immediately directed Stick to ride along the left bank, while he himself climbed on the mound and began to study the surroundings.

He was hardly stationed on top when he heard Stick calling out.

All the men galloped up and saw the hoof-prints of several horses on the swampy shore of the stream.

The grass had been trodden and trampled down.

"We were not mistaken," said Kolodin. "God will decide our luck, but we've made a good start."

"The tracks are fresh," commented Stick. "The horses were watered before dawn. That's he; it couldn't be any one else!"

"Maybe some camping Kirghiz were passing by?" Grigoritch voiced his doubts.

"We would have met them."

"We might have missed them too, if they had turned in the direction of Nikolævsky."

"We'll find out right away," said Kolodin.

He rode away from the creek, following the tracks. They disappeared almost immediately in the grass, but could be seen clearly farther on in the vast expanse of the salt-marsh.

"Look," Kolodin called out; "the tracks lead into the steppe, and not from it."

"That's right."

"Then, don't you see? Some of the tracks are deeper and clearer than the others—which means there was a rider driving unmounted horses. Isn't it so?"

"Absolutely!"

"Now, where do the tracks lead? Behind the mound? Then there is no question but that the Kirghiz has gone to the second ford. It never would have entered his head to make a false trail from here; he was driving before dawn, and did not realize that he had left any tracks. Don't you see?"

The Cossacks were delighted.

"What a head you have, Ivan Stépanitch! You read the steppe like an open book."

"You are a real prairie wolf."

"Well, boys, let's water our horses and give them a mouthful of grass, and we're off again."

An hour later they were galloping across the expanse of the steppe.

II

The steppe stretched out limitless. In every direction, as far as the eye could see, it merged with the horizon, wrapped in a fine bluish haze. Calm and silent it lay. Only at times the wind, free and changeable, would rustle the feather grass or raise a cloud of dust from the barren mound. Then it would quiet down again, the dust would settle and the boundless plain would again be silent and still. Even the hawk would seem plunged in slumber, motionless in the high heavens, its wings spread out in the air.

The sun was scorching. The noon hour was left far behind.

The Cossacks as well as their horses were tired, exhausted by the heat, which seemed to grow steadily, forming a misty smoke at the edge of the horizon.

The men began to mutter irritably that they had not come upon either a creek or a well, or any dwelling where they could get water for themselves and their horses.

"We shall kill the horses," grumbled Grigoritch in his deep voice. "Damn him, the shave-headed rascal! Wait until we catch him; I'll choke him to death with my own hands."

He puckered his red brow fiercely.

"I am sure it's still quite a way to Black River."

"We might be wasting our time," chimed in Stick: "not catch the others and spoil our horses into the bargain. See how they lather."

"If you listen to me, I would advise going back," added Neudobny. "It's like pursuing the wind."

The three men looked at Kolodin.

"Well," said their leader, "you're old women, it seems to me. You must have forgotten the ninety-verst rides you used to do in the service. I remember I would be so tired I could hardly sit in the saddle, would be all benumbed, and the horse would begin to rattle and still I would continue to gallop, to gallop as though in a heated furnace, choking for want of air. I would wish for a river or a creek into which I could tumble from my horse and stay under water and drink and drink. But suddenly—there comes the enemy! With shrieks and shouts they gallop toward you. And you forget the hundred versts you have ridden, and the river, and that you haven't eaten or drunk for the whole day—you forget everything. You would train your lances, shout goodness knows what, gallop, lunge, bayonet, sabre, shoot. Smoke and dust fly into your eyes, your mouth; you seem to be pushing somewhere; and a kind of ferocity gets hold of you; and of your horse, too, for it bites and neighs. I remember once, a young Sart attacked me, he was quite young, just a boy, good-looking, with big black eyes. His horse fell under him, he jumped up, and I raised my sabre. My heart ached, I felt so sorry

for him. But my horse rushed at him, grabbed his cheek—and tore it—”

Kalodin lashed his horse and galloped forward, cutting short his story.

At that moment Stick, rising in his saddle, shouted: “A lake!”

But it was not a lake.

Looking in front of them the Cossacks saw an immense expanse of water sparkling under the rays of sun. It seemed as though a river had overflowed, rising over its low banks, and inundated the whole steppe to its horizon, forming quiet but limitless bays. The sun glinted and glanced from them, blinding and painning the eyes with its glittering.

It was a mirage, but the illusion was complete.

It seemed as if even a light cool breeze were coming from the illusive waters. The Cossacks could not take their eyes from the magic panorama. But now amidst the white waters showed islands—dark figures of awkward camels moved here and there as if rising slowly from the water.

“A dwelling,” joyfully exclaimed the men.

As they galloped farther a Kirghiz camp was outlined amid the water expanse. The lake grew smaller, its shores changed their shape, disappeared. Mounds were formed in their place, islands, sand banks.

Then the water disappeared altogether.

The Kirghiz camp was near.

“It’s a dog’s dwelling,” muttered Grigoritch; “let’s

see who lives here. But be careful, boys; these shave-headed brutes are crafty."

A middle-aged, short Kirghiz came out of the tent. He was barefooted, and wore a dirty shirt, the open collar of which disclosed a tanned, copper-like chest. His high-boned face, black from sunburn, his narrow, quick eyes and his sparse beard, which seemed to be half pulled out, all played a part in the welcoming nods he tossed towards the Cossacks.

"How! How! Russian men," he murmured, showing his white teeth. "Welcome, Russian men."

"How do you do, friend," answered Kolodin.

The Kirghiz nodded his head still quicker and, smiling cordially, shook everybody by the hand. But his eyes scanned the faces of the Cossacks inquisitively and anxiously. Behind him, from under the side of the tent, another face was observing the newcomers with a suspicious glance like that of a wolf. It was a swarthy girl's face with black, burning eyes.

"Have a rest in our tent, Russian men," invited the Kirghiz. "Drink kumiss. Ah, ah, fine kumiss. Best kumiss."

The Cossacks glanced questioningly at their leader; it was obvious that they wanted to rest in the coolness of the tent.

But Kolodin would not let them.

"We have no time, friend," he said; "bring us a cup of kumiss out here, and water our horses. We're in a hurry."

He dismounted, however, to stretch his benumbed limbs, and glanced indifferently about the tent.

The Kirghiz ran to obey the order.

He said something quickly in Kirghiz to the girl, who disappeared inside and presently came back carrying a large jug of kumiss, while the Kirghiz was drawing water from the well for the horses.

"My beauty," Kolodin addressed the girl, who was pouring into wooden cups the wonderful drink of the steppes which the Cossacks were gulping as fast as she poured, "tell me in what direction did the Kirghiz go with the horses?"

The girl looked askance at him with her suspicious glance.

"Not know," she said morosely; "Russian no understand."

Kolodin repeated his question in Kirghiz.

But the girl kept on saying: "Not know!"

The Kolodin called out to the Kirghiz who was approaching with a pailful of water.

"Tell me, my good friend, where did the Kirghiz go with the horses?"

The man placed his bright green pail on the ground, and assumed a surprised look.

"Kirghiz? No Kirghiz. No saw Kirghiz. Long time no saw Kirghiz. Here no passage to Kirghiz land—no road—no Kirghiz."

"Are you speaking the truth?" frowned Kolodin.

"Say, you there, what's your name?" said Grigor-

itch in his bass voice. "Tursunbaika? Bukharbaika?"

"Min Kurman," replied the Kirghiz.

"Well, Kurmanka, listen to me. If you lie and shield a thief, on my word you're a dead man!"

He cracked his fingers as he clenched his fist.

"Do you hear? Better speak plain! You'll get into jail anyhow when we tie you and take you to the authorities, but meanwhile——"

He made a ferocious face. "We'll skin you!"

The Kirghiz paled visibly even under his tan and his eyes shifted from side to side. In anguish he rushed towards the Cossacks and began to swear that he had seen no Kirghiz.

"Why should I lie?" he muttered. "Kurman is a truthful man. You trust Kurman. All Russian know him. No Kirghiz—no saw Kirghiz."

He rushed to the girl.

"Pour kumiss. Drink kumiss, friends! Very good kumiss."

He filled the cups himself and handed them to the men.

But his hands were shaking.

The Cossacks were at a loss what to think.

"Is he lying, the dog, or has he really seen no one?" they asked each other while watering the horses.

"Well, who knows?" Stick was pondering. "It sometimes happens that one thief hides his booty from another. They avoid each other."

"Nonsense," said Grigoritch. "Where would he

water the horses, then, if he went through here? He knows just as well as we that you can get along faster with watered horses."

"He must know better than we do! He knows where there's a well, while we pass it by as an empty spot."

"Sure, that's true, but still—"

While the Cossacks were giving the horses a chance to drink and were talking among themselves, Kolodin walked slowly away from the camp. His keen glance had long ago noticed a dark object not far away and he was making his way towards it. He did not expect to see anything special—perhaps a piece of rope or a dirty rag from some Kirghiz garment. He was guided simply by habit, acquired in the steppe, never to let pass any clue. However, when he bent down to it he suddenly felt a mounting rage sweep him.

"Oh, the thief, the liar," he muttered under his breath; "he almost threw me off the trail."

With unusual speed he approached the Kirghiz, and, thrusting into his face a piece of leather halter, he shouted:

"And what is this?"

His face, already hot from the ride, had reddened still more from an access of irrepressible fury.

"Tell me, you thief! Where does this come from?"

With increasing rage he brandished the piece of halter before the Kirghiz, who seemed to have shrunk

together at sight of it, and who was shifting from one foot to the other in utter confusion, while the Cossacks shouted all at the same time:

"The dog! The liar!"

"The dirty heathen!"

"I know the halter," shouted Grigoritch. "It belongs to Mikulin. I've had it in my hands many a time!"

"How did it come here?"

"Last night George went into the village from where we herded the horses, and, coming back, did not take it off the horse."

"That means Mikulin's horse has been stolen!"

"Let's bind him," shouted Stick, "and take him to the authorities. Maybe he is the thief himself."

"They're all one gang. All thieves."

"So, you went horse-stealing—damn you!"

Grigoritch swung round towards the Kirghiz.

"Ivan Stépanitch," he said, "let me teach the rascal a lesson! I'll show him! I'll make him answer. I'll untie his tongue. I'll make him sing!"

And he grabbed the man by his shirt collar.

"Speak, you dog! Where did the thief go?"

But Kolodin pushed him aside, muttering under his breath:

"Get out of my way. I'll do it myself!"

Swinging his fist, he was about to strike the Kirghiz in the face. Something bitter, something muddy was

rising from the depth of his soul, and he took it for indignation at the sight of the treachery. And this muddiness obscured his consciousness.

The Kirghiz fell on his knees.

Terror-stricken, he was trying to avoid the blow, and was shouting, pointing his hand towards the steppe:

"There, there Kirghiz. Oh, no beat Kurman, Russian man! Please no beat! There went Kirghiz."

This late confession would not have saved the man from the blow, but at that moment, with the speed of lightning, the young girl threw herself between him and Kolodin, protecting her father by her own breast covered with jingling coins. She began to speak quickly and angrily in her incomprehensible tongue, and her black eyes, like burning coals, flamed with such a violent rage that Kolodin grew confused.

"She-wolf," he said, and moved to push her aside.

But the Kirghiz girl cried out, and suddenly bit Kolodin's hand with her sharp teeth. The pain was such that he threw her far away by an impulsive movement of his hand.

Then he felt ashamed. It seemed as though a veil fell from his eyes.

"Men," he said, looking around in confusion, "what has happened to us? Are we bandits? To fight with an old man and a girl!"

He jumped on his horse.

"Let's go!"

"How's that?" spoke up Grigoritch in surprise. "Shouldn't we teach the dog—take him to the authorities?"

"We have no time to lose; each minute is valuable. It's getting late. He showed us the way; that's enough. Let's go! What a brave girl, hey?" He looked towards her. "She came to the defense of her father."

Although muttering under their breath, the Cossacks obeyed their leader and, jumping upon their horses, galloped off at high speed across the expanse of the steppe.

When they had ridden a long way from the camp, Kolodin turned round once more. The Kirghiz was nowhere to be seen; he had apparently gone into the tent; but the girl was lying on the spot where Kolodin had thrown her, her head on her hands as if trying to hide her face in the ground.

III

Strange thoughts took hold of Kolodin, new thoughts such as he never had known before. He felt a gnawing in his breast when he looked at his bitten hand and recalled the angry face of the Kirghiz girl who had rushed so bravely to defend her father. He was sorry for that girl whom he—a strong Cossack—had treated so roughly. She was just as weak and frail as his own Anuta; he had felt it when he had pushed her

and touched her body. He even pictured to himself his little Anuta in her place, and suddenly he had a revulsion of feeling.

Forgetting himself, he said aloud:

"We live like beasts."

The Cossacks turned their red, perspiring faces to him, but had no time to ask for an explanation of these words, because, at that moment, Stick, who had ridden forward, stopped his horse and shouted:

"Hey, come here!"

He was looking at something, bending low towards the ground.

It was almost evening.

The sun was growing redder, wrapped in the mist of rising vapours; its light had become soft and tender. The spot where Stick stood was in the shadow, falling in a long strip, from a barren mound.

"What is it? Tracks?" asked the Cossacks.

Stick silently pointed to the object which had arrested his attention. It was so small and so nearly buried in feathergrass that only the trained eye of a Cossack could have distinguished it.

"A cigarette!" exclaimed Grigoritch.

He jumped down from his horse, picked up the hand-rolled cigarette, and, turning it over, mused speculatively:

"Smoked not long ago; the ashes are still at the end."

He smelled it.

"It still smells. Hasn't had time to dry out. He is near, boys. We're following the right tracks, that's sure; and whoever it may be, he is not far away."

"Forward!"

Stick stretched himself in the saddle, surveying the surroundings with a keen glance.

They galloped straight to the mound.

"Let's go round it."

"No, no!" shouted Stick, who was growing more and more ferocious. "Drive at the top of the mound. From there we can see across a long distance. Let's look around."

"But we can be seen too."

"What does it matter! Why should we hide? If he is near, we'll get him anyway, and if he is far we won't be able to catch up with him, not knowing the country. Night is close."

"That's right!"

"The rascal is near; I feel it, boys, I have a nose for it."

The mound rose larger as they approached it. Its top was reddened by the sun behind it, while its sides, covered with feather-grass, were spotted here and there by salt-marshes. The ground was soft in these places and clearly stamped by the tracks of several horses.

"He was here just a little while ago." The Cossacks communicated their impressions to each other in an undertone.

"He rounded the mound; see how the ground is trampled. He must have galloped at full speed."

"Forward, boys!"

The nearness of their enemy excited the men. They bent almost to the horses' manes, inciting them to greater speed; the horses, catching their mood, flew like birds, breathing hard as they were mounting. Suddenly the red rays of the sun blinded men and horses, and before them stretched the limitless expanse of the steppe, tinted with hues of rose and lavender. It seemed as if the earth, heated through the day, had taken fire, and cast its flaming reflection all over the heavens, while the transparent mist of vapour, shot through with the fiery glow, was tinged deeper and deeper violet as the setting sun sank into it. The mound sloped down suddenly into an immense valley, like the bank of a waterless ocean. A small river with deep banks, overgrown with reeds and half dried up, wound in the middle of this valley. It babbled along the foot of the mound, and, making a sharp turn, ran out into the steppe, losing itself amid brushwood.

"Look around," said Stick, rising in his stirrups and shading his eyes with the palm of his hand. "It's either here or nowhere. Behind that wood begins the Kirghiz steppe; if he's gotten beyond these trees, he's lost to us. It's night, and he can go in whatever direction he chooses; he knows all the paths and trails there; besides, his own people will hide him."

"Isn't he hiding in the wood?" rumbled Grigoritch.

"If he's clever, he certainly is."

"Let's search it. If he is there, the horses will answer; you can't keep them quiet."

"You blockhead, that wood is more than a verst through. Search it!"

"Maybe. But what else are we to do? We aren't going to spend the night on this mound; we must decide on something. It seems to me that if the man has gone in this direction there is no other place for him to be but in the wood. He hasn't had time to reach the steppe."

At these words all the men looked at Kolodin, awaiting his advice and his decision.

"What do you say, Ivan Stépanitch?"

"We must divide," he said. "Two of us will round the wood, one to the right and one to the left, while two will ride through it, and we will call to each other once in a while. If the Kirghiz is there he cannot escape us, no matter where he goes; and if he is already gone—good-bye to the horses. Here's our last chance, boys!"

He directed Stick to go to the right and Neudobny to the left, while he told Grigoritch to come with him through the wood.

Hardly were the Cossacks ready to follow the instructions of their leader when a distant neighing reached their ears. At that same moment, from a little grove beside the mound, there galloped a horseman mounted on a steppe racer, who made for the forest.

"The Kirghiz!"

The fugitive bent to the saddle-bow and whooping sped on, trying to gain time and reach the thicket before the Cossacks could come down from the mound. He must have been making ready when they reached the top, preparing to speed on with his booty; but, seeing the danger so close, he had abandoned this booty—two strong, small Cossack horses which neighed and joyously galloped across the steppe, first following him and then turning towards the pursuers.

The border-hunter's instinct awakened in the men.

As soon as they saw the horse-thief, without exchanging a word or a look, they bent to their saddle-bows and galloped down the mound with such speed that the clayish dust of the hill enveloped them completely. The stones, flying from under the horses' hoofs, leaped down the slope until they reached the river and, with soft splashes, disappeared in its transparent whirlpools and curves.

"Cut across," ordered Kolodin in a hoarse voice as they reached the bottom of the hill.

Stick immediately turned to the right, while Neudobny went to the left, in order to outride the thief and bar the way to the forest.

Kolodin galloped straight forward.

He had forgotten everything; the world was centered in the fleeing horseman.

Rising in his stirrups he thought with anguish: "He'll escape, the dog!" and shouted hoarsely:

"Take to the left, to the left, boys! Grigoritch, cut across!"

Grigoritch knew his business.

He flew like a bird, bending low to the horse's mane. Stretching his neck, he was gazing after the speeding enemy with round, ferocious eyes; he kept his gun ready, waiting for a favourable moment to fire his charmed bullet.

The sun had turned dark red and seemed to flood the picture of the desperate pursuit with blood. In the sky a bird circled curiously, beating its wings, while a badger, frightened by the unusual sight, rose on its hind legs near its hole, then quickly ran down it, to reappear instantly and whistle with surprise.

IV

The Kirghiz was gaining ground.

His racer, accustomed to great speed and sensing the danger, hardly touched the ground in its mad flight, its neck stretched, its nostrils blowing, its blood-shot eyes staring straight ahead.

Just a little more . . .

Only the river separated the man from the safety of the thicket. One last effort. He bends still lower towards the neck of his horse, making ready for the jump into the cool waters of the river.

But the clay bank at this spot is high, precipitous, steep—the horse, frightened, stops at the brink,

irresolute whether to leap, and digging into the ground with its trembling feet.

Meanwhile, from the right side, shouting and whooping, the fantastically thin figure of Stick comes flying on, and from the left Neudobny pushes through the bushes.

From the back they are also overtaking him.

The Kirghiz can hear somebody's hoarse, strong voice:

"Go round, round, boys; take him alive."

With a last desperate effort the horse-thief tightens the reins so that blood and foam show on the animal's mouth. At the same time he strikes with his whip.

The horse rears and seems to dance in the purple light of the sunset.

"Boom-oom-oom!" a roaring, rumbling, crashing noise echoes throughout the steppe.

Grigoritch had fired, rising in his saddle. He had bided his time.

The steppe racer jumped, tossed about for an instant, and together with its rider disappeared in the ravine of the stream. The Cossacks noticed that with three leaps the horse reached the other bank of the river and, all wet and trembling, vanished into the forest.

The Kirghiz was not on the horse.

The perplexed Stick and Neudobny viewed the bank and watched the water splash in the wide river-bed, shaking the dry reeds. Their horses, unaccustomed

to precipices, kept at a distance, eyeing it fearfully, although they were stretching their necks and inhaling the inviting moisture-laden freshness. With one glance the Cossacks observed that the steep bank stretched on a long distance and there was no path nor slope by which one could climb down.

"That's strange; where is the Kirghiz?" they asked one another.

"Did he run to the forest?" wondered Stick.

"How could he? The bank stands out as plain as the palm of your hand. We would have seen him."

"Couldn't he go through the bushes?"

"He had no time—he is no hare. We must look under the bank; he must have hidden himself."

"That can't be; we can see from here."

"Did he drown?"

Again the men exchanged glances.

"It might be that, Grigoritch."

At that instant, like an arrow, Kolodin flew by them, and, bending to the pommel, whooped and shouted in such a way that his horse, without hesitating, plunged madly over the precipice, and flattening its ears and stretching out, cut into the deep waters of the river whirlpool. A second later, wet and frightened, it was on the other shore.

"Surround the wood," shouted Kolodin, turning his red face towards the men. "What's the matter with you devils? Move quick!"

"There is no Kirghiz in the wood," shouted the

Cossacks in one voice. "No Kirghiz there; Ivan Sté-pa-nitch!"

But Kolodin, who had not seen that the horse had run riderless into the forest, did not heed the cries of his companions. Filled with the ardour of the pursuit, he dashed off into the grove.

Grigoritch stopped on the shore, together with Stick and Neudobny.

"I killed him," he affirmed in a tone permitting no objections.

"Did you?" doubted Stick.

"My bullet was charmed, I told you! No use pursuing him. He can't go far. We'll find him by following the tracks."

"But the horse was riderless!"

"Riderless?"

"Sure; we saw it."

"He must have fallen down. Plumb dead. We must look under the bank."

"We've looked. One can see from here as plain as your hand. He is nowhere there."

Grigoritch puckered his red brow.

"He must have drowned."

"But did he drown? Did you kill him?" Stick questioned doubtingly. "And what if he escaped?"

"Let's look in the bushes," suggested Neudobny. "We'll hobble our horses and go down to the river; they are sly, these heathen."

"No," said Stick; "better surround the wood as

Kolodin ordered. Neudobny, you go to the right, and I'll take the left. We'll have time to search the place. He won't be able to crawl very far. That'll be surer."

"I'll look around here," said Grigoritch, dismounting.

He tied the legs of his horse and climbed downhill. There he walked up and down the swampy ground, searching in vain for tracks. It seemed that neither man nor beast had ever traversed this deserted spot. Only on the opposite bank the earth was disturbed by recent horse-tracks, and the dry reeds were broken in places. In vain did Grigoritch scan with his keen glance the thick willows growing on the edge of the forest and bending their green boughs almost to the water.

Softly whispered the willows, but did not betray their secret.

Suddenly Grigoritch noticed near the shore a strange round object like the end of a watermelon.

It floated slowly on the water.

Grigoritch broke a twig and reached for it.

It proved to be an old skull cap, foul with perspiration.

The last doubt had vanished.

"He has drowned," murmured the Cossack.

He climbed up, stretched himself on the ground and bent an avid glance upon the calm, softly purling waters of the whirlpool.

"If only with one eye," he mused, doubting no longer the magic effect of the charmed bullet, "if only I could look at him with one eye! The old woman said that such a bullet strikes the forehead and goes through; there must be two holes."

Meanwhile Kolodin had entered the grove.

The warm air gathered through the day, permeated by the aroma of wood flowers, breathed into his face. His horse, excited by the pursuit, was rattling and pushing through thick bushes entwined by hop vines. It had to stop finally because the bushes were becoming impassable; while the slender-trunked trees stood close to each other as if they were afraid of the loneliness of the steppe and tried to keep together, to merge into one dark green friendly family.

Kolodin grumbled under his breath, dismounted and began to listen to the sounds of the forest.

The wind, passing lightly over the tops of the trees, rustled them mysteriously. Somewhere an owl cried out twice, as though it were saying good-night to the retiring sun. The crows circled high in the boughs and cawed despairingly, returning for the night in great flocks from unknown excursions.

"He is gone," flashed through Kolodin's mind, and he felt as vexed as would a hunter who had lost big game.

An instant later his ear caught the sound of a horse's rattling breath, coming in long sighs, broken and hardly audible.

The hunter's spirit was again awakened in him, the spirit of his wild and warrior-like ancestors who conquered the steppe. His heart beating fast, he fixed his eyes upon the mysterious thicket, shot through with the purple reflection of the setting sun. He tied his horse to the trunk of a young elm, and, holding his gun in readiness, began to steal forward noiselessly, pressing close to the ground and listening intently at any suspicious sound, or twisting skilfully between the bushes without touching them.

A horse's heavy breathing sounded almost at his elbow.

One more step . . .

The horse, its head stretched out, was lying in the deep grass of a small glade, breathing hoarsely at long intervals. There was a gaping wound in its neck from which the blood gushed in a stream—the charmed bullet was at work! Beside the horse, leaning against a tree and half bent forward, stood a Kirghiz. He was bareheaded and soaked through from his recent ducking; he was gazing intently somewhere into the distance. Kolodin looked in the same direction and noticed that the opposite shore could be seen through a natural opening in the woods. The Kirghiz was watching the movements of his enemies, not suspecting that one of them was so close.

Kolodin raised his gun.

“Surrender!”

The man started, turned round and threw himself

against the tree. His face was contorted with insane terror. His small, slant eyes shifted to and fro, until they stopped on the glittering muzzle. His hand instinctively drew his knife from his belt, but the next moment it dropped helplessly.

"Throw down your knife—I'll kill you," ordered Kolodin with concentrated rage.

The man's lips were trembling.

He could not take his eyes away from the muzzle, and the Cossack heard him whisper:

"Allah . . . Allah . . ."

Kolodin was aiming into his face; some force, like that which prompts a man looking into a precipice to jump down, was urging him to pull the trigger.

One instant and—there would be no Kirghiz.

He would fall bleeding, as his ancestors had fallen, and Kolodin would look with angry curiosity upon the smoking wound in his forehead, muttering under his breath:

"The heathen dog!"

At this terrible moment he had forgotten everything—neither earth nor sky existed for him any more. He had forgotten that it was not an enemy he had met in battle, but a simple horse-thief whom he had to catch alive and turn over to the authorities. It was not the Kolodin who sat reading a book late into the night. It was a wolf who had tracked another wolf. He was filled with only one desire:

To kill!

Blood was pounding in his temples. His hand trembled on the trigger, his sight was growing cloudy.

One instant—

But in this instant it seemed that some mysterious shadow shut out the distracted, terrorized face of the Kirghiz—and another face stood out of the clouds before Kolodin, beautiful in its wild fury, with eyes burning sullenly—the face of the Kirghiz girl who had protected her father with her frail body. As before, that face reminded him of Anuta and was replaced by his daughter's image. Now it was Anuta's face, sweet and dear, with a timid, childish smile, that trembled and wavered in the twilight between the Kirghiz and the muzzle of the gun. It seemed to Kolodin that words, soft as the whisper of the wind, sounded from far, far away, in the air drenched with the faint perfume of the woods:

“Papa! What are you doing? Papa!”

A ray of light seemed to flash through Kolodin's mind.

Something quivered in his soul, something which could not yet be expressed in words flowed through his veins, like a warm wave. His recent thoughts stood out before him not in words but in images, and he saw the beast in himself. And this uncovered beast immediately hid its head. His own anger was incomprehensible to Kolodin.

He lowered the gun slowly.

"Throw down your knife. Surrender," he repeated in a stern voice.

The Kirghiz threw the knife away.

Kolodin began to unfasten his leather belt, approaching the man with slow steps. The Kirghiz stood silent, submitting to his fate. What was there for him to say or do? He had lost his loot and now had to pay. It even did not enter his head that he, small and lacking in strength, could fight this giant.

Kolodin tied his hands.

"So you got caught?" he asked sardonically.

And suddenly he laughed a soft laugh.

"Are you married, friend?"

"Married," replied the man with his lips only.

"Have you children?"

Then, placing his powerful hand upon the man's shoulder, Kolodin spoke in Kirghiz:

"Listen, friend. Why do you steal? We have a different faith, but God is always the same. And it is a sin. Don't you hear me?"

The Kirghiz looked at him in surprise.

"It's the need," he answered; "I've taxes to pay, and we must eat. One has to live, pay a little here and a little there. The judge does not have to steal. But Bukharbai does! Bukharbai is a poor man."

"Well," said Kolodin, "God help you. I cannot judge you. They'll bury you alive in jail! And we all are sinners. Listen, Bukharbai! Swear to me that you'll stop stealing. Do you hear me? Promise!"

Bukharbai did not understand what it was all about, but passed his palms over his face and said:

“Allah!”

Kolodin pulled the belt from the hands of the Kirghiz.

“Sit here and don’t move. Do you understand? When we ride away—then you’re free to go wherever you want!”

The Kirghiz did not understand.

He looked at the Cossack with wide-open, surprised eyes.

Kolodin laughed softly and walked away.

Night shadows were spreading over the forest.

The last death sigh of the horse reached Kolodin’s ears. He turned round once and saw the Kirghiz at the same spot, motionless.

Kolodin made a large detour in search of the ford and came in sight of the Cossacks, who called out to him:

“Is there anything?”

“Nothing,” he replied.

“He has escaped, the dog!” exclaimed Grigoritch; “and where is his horse?”

“Dead. You hit it in the neck.”

“What a pity! We could have used it.” And he asked, pondering:

“What do you think, Ivan Stépanitch; did the dog get drowned?”

Kolodin laughed softly in answer.

Soon the Cossacks lassoed their horses and drove back through the silent, sleeping steppe, having decided to stop for the night midway from the village. Grigoritch told tales in his deep voice about the merits of a charmed bullet from which nothing could escape—neither man nor beast nor bird. Stick and Neudobny listened attentively, while Kolodin rode far ahead of them. He had given himself up to the power of thoughts and feelings that overwhelmed him. It seemed to him that some new life, unknown to him till now, was opening up before him.

THE LITTLE COIN

By ANGHEL KARALITCHEFF

(Bulgarian)

“TELL my fortune.”

Two burning black eyes waited to catch the secret which Grandpa Gheno was about to reveal. Grandpa Gheno sees through the years, through the clouds and the mountains, beyond unknown seas. He can tell you where your road is going and how you will travel along it—whether on a fiery horse or a limping donkey.

Two young eyes implored him.

The fire began to flame up, yellow sparks flew about, and the branches of the old willow, which had bent its trunk out over the gushing spring,¹ trembled in alarm. Black leaves began to rock about in the clear water of the stone trough.

Evening had fallen upon the plain of Belin. Above the place where the sun had gone down there appeared a yellow star, resembling a little coin dropped from the

¹ The word spring is a translation of the Bulgarian word “Chesma,” a sort of ever-flowing hydrant beside the road, through which the clear water of a walled-in spring runs into a large stone trough. In some cases the water for the “chesma” is brought from distant mountain streams through long pipes of hollow pine logs.

necklace of Jesus' mother. Little crickets began to chirp over the drooping wheat heads. Along the great road which led toward the level land of Dobroudga a white head cloth was seen and a bright-colored baby's hammock, a child's voice was heard, a little black head showed itself and two eyes popped wide open. The upright slats on the sides of a heavy hay rack rattled, and the backs of a pair of big water buffaloes rose and fell. In a little while, all these and the broad white road sank beneath the warm waves of the grain fields. The blackened peaks of the Balkan mountains began to fall away. The woods and hills tucked themselves out of sight some where or other. The trees, scattered throughout the fields lay down to sleep on the soft blanket of ripening wheat. Nothing was left but the silent green mist over the plain. In the midst of the plain was the willow tree bending over the trough filled with scum-covered water and the little grass plot lighted up by a vigorous fire. Beside the fire a group of girl harvesters ² had lain down, worn out by their long journey. They were all sound asleep, as if they had just taken a bath. Only two of them looked up at the evening star making its way across the black sky, and as they listened to the whispering of the wheat stalks a sweet sadness melted in their eyes. They asked the wakeful star to drop low over the village camping

² In Bulgaria large groups of girls, conducted by old, reliable men, go from village to village to harvest the grain, which is all cut by hand, with the aid of an ordinary sickle and a special wooden glove with a curved horn at one end.

grounds when the secret trysting hour was passing above their village beyond the mountain, where "the Huts" are. That's the place where the black-eyed horse boys sleep. The girls wanted the star to creep along the thick capes of the sleepers and to say: "Greetings from the harvester girls."

Old Grandpa Gheno, the girls' supervisor, smoked as he sat half reclining by the fire with his heavy, much-decorated coat thrown about him. On her knees before him was Vella, the youngest of the harvesters. She had never been to unknown parts before and was so wild that she couldn't get her fill of looking at things she had heard about; nor was she able to go far enough to suit her or to sleep when the night came. She ran before the others with bare feet and flowing hair like a wild goat. She scampered up all the hills which had stood along the road since time immemorial—so as to find a high enough place from which to look out over the great fields and the villages submerged in the yellow laughter of summer time. Her joy knew no bounds of a morning when she came across a white stork as it was slowly walking along the stones and bending its head over the broad river. No stork ever came down to her village.

This evening Grandpa Gheno was telling her fortune. With her hand outstretched she waited, like a lamb on its first St. George's day when the shepherd fixes his gaze upon it as he opens the little gate of the fold early in the morning. The white lamb waits

and wonders whether the master will throw it over his shoulder and carry it off to serve as a holiday feast of whether he will turn it out to frolic over the broad plain.

Vella held her breath while the old man bit his walnut pipe, elevated his right brow, squinted his eyes, touched the extended brown arm and, wrapped in thought, read the girl's fortune.

"Tell me what's written."

"Wait."

"Just see what an awful man you are, don't torment me that way."

"Don't outrun your fortune teller, little chicky. Let me take a good look. It's not just words that I have to read, but your fate. Hold on now, don't pout or I'll not tell you a single thing. Here, let me see your eyes! That's right. Black. Awfully black and full of fire," softly whispered the old man to himself. Then he grew silent, gave himself up to thought for a moment and went on:

"There's no getting away from that. In the end everything comes down to a little coin."

"What kind of a little coin, Uncle?"

"A little piece of white, silver money."

"Where is it?"

"On your neck, little Vella. It contains your fortune. You were born on a lucky hour, you've got the little coin and it'll bring you the best of everything. Who put it on your necklace, your mother?"

"Yes, do you remember her?"

"Do I remember her? Yes, I do, how could I help it? Why she and I, who . . ."

"What?"

"Nothing. Your mother once wore the little coin. One fall my grandfather—Lord, have mercy on his soul—dug it up as he was plowing at Beliabreg. The little silver kostadinka glistened in the furrow. He took it to the priest, Petko—you don't remember him—that was in Turkish times, and after he looked at it he said to your grandfather, 'Hang on to that, old fellow, you've found good luck.' My grandmother wore it and when she died she gave it to mamma. Since we didn't have any sister, mamma gave it to our youngest brother, Kolyou, your daddy."

The night grew darker and darker and bright dew drops began to glisten on the ends of the tiny wheat beards, drooping over the girls' heads.

"Have they gone to sleep?"

"They are asleep."

Like a watchful chieftain, the old man looked over the girls stretched on the ground; before the break of dawn he would start off with them on the way to Dobroudga in order to harvest its wheat. The girls from "the Huts" were warm as they slept with half opened, blistered lips. The soft yellow light of the fire bathed their dark faces and their hard chemises of village homespun which creaked from their deep breathing.

"Why aren't you asleep?"

"I'm not sleepy. Say, are there many little coins like mine?"

"No. Yours is the only one on earth and lucky is the person who wears it."

"Why?"

"Because it wasn't mine."

Vella laid her head on his knee.

"Was mamma an unusual girl?"

"The most unusual that ever was!"

Grandpa Gheno swallowed hard and his eyes grew lively. Something from long ago began to burn in them. Something that had passed and would never come back. For the bent willow will never grow young again.

"Do I look like her?" asked Vella.

"Like your mother?"

The old man leaned over and felt the warm breath of a young life with beating wings. A shudder went over him; the same. An image of her mother, as if she and the girl were two drops of water.

"Vellie—"

He felt like telling her here on the very spot.

"Listen, child, I have gone over the hill. Your mother passed away long ago. Didn't she ever tell you about me?"

"No, Uncle."

"No? That was right. That was like your mother, she always kept things to herself. She kept that to

herself, too. What a lot of water has passed under the bridge, what great rocks have been overturned; but that night, how well I remember it, as though it had just happened yesterday."

"What?"

"Why, that. There at that very water trough. You must remember that trough. You're young. Maybe you'll pass here again sometime. It was here that I lost everything. Under this same old willow. Hey, look how its back's broken. It's so old it's forgotten its age. But it was young then. Its branches were tender and soft. They were singing songs. All around the Belin plain was burning with yellow wheat. It always seems to me that the wheat was bigger then. If you rubbed a head out in your hand, it had grains as big as hazel-nuts. All along the pathways between the fields heavy blackberries hung down, each one like a bunch of grapes. You could gather as many as you liked."

He became silent.

"When you come back past this place may you never be forgiven if you don't stop and say, 'God, have mercy on him.' "

"On who?"

"On me."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Nothing. Go to sleep."

The old man stroked her on the forehead and lost himself in his *nothing*.

That evening he and Kolyou had taken out the two black horses. The animals stood before them with backs shining like tar. The two young brothers got on them. The older boy was happy, burning with joy. The younger one knew nothing about what they were going to do. And before they had given the first lash to their horses the younger one's began to paw with its left foot. That's not a good sign. If your horse takes to pawing with its left foot, turn around and go back home.

Gheno and Kolyou sailed across the fields. The moon sailed over them, stars fell into the wheat.

Kolyou asked him, "Where you going, brother?"

"We're going to steal a girl from Cherkeuvee village."

"Which girl?"

"Guess."

"Which house does she live in?"

"In the big house across from the church."

"Rada Vulyouva?"

"Yes."

Kolyou at once reined up his horse and turned around.

"Stop, brother, let's go back."

Gheno laughed at him derisively.

"Did little Kolyou lose his nerve? All right, let him wait outside the village. I'll do the job myself. Don't stop me for the night'll soon be over."

And he turned round to look at his brother. The

younger boy's eyes were like two glowing coals, like the eyes of a wolf. His right hand was plucking hair from his horse's mane.

"Are you coming along?"

Gheno started off by himself, but he had hardly gone a hundred steps when the youngster flew past him like a cyclone, shouting, "Come on-n-n!"

"That's the stuff."

The fire began to go out. The little plot of grass grew dark. The willow got black and the dark faces of the girls got black. For a long time Grandpa Gheno poked about in the fire with a half burnt stick. The girl had closed her eyes, she had gone to sleep. The old man wanted to tell her the rest in a whisper but didn't dare. He bent over until he almost touched her forehead and looked at her for a long time. What was she dreaming about?

The willow began to rustle. Another memory stirred.

When they came back she was thrown over the horse in front of him—Vella's mother. They stopped here on this grassy plot. Their horses were trembling, all covered with foam. They turned them loose to graze. Kolyou went along after them in the moonlight, he disappeared and the two were left by themselves, he and she. He remembers her as all ashudder that first night. Her heart was in a flutter and so were her eyes in which the stars bathed themselves. He sat down beside her and caressed her forehead with his

hand. Her head was hot. It was baked as though by a fire which had just been stirred up. The young willow had thrown a heavy shadow over them and enshrouded them. Gheno didn't know what to talk to her about. She was just about to become his bride but the fellow didn't know how to start a conversation with her. He slowly put his arms about her and bent his head down upon her breast. He felt a cold disk on his forehead. He ran his fingers over her necklace and found it to be of black beads with a little coin in the middle. He looked at it and started—it was his mother's. Something in his breast gave way.

"Where did you get it?" he asked.

There was no answer.

"Tell me, who gave it to you?"

Instead of answering him, she threw herself wildly on his neck, embraced him, poured her warm breath over him, intoxicated him. Oblivion seized upon him, he sank away. Never had he felt such a burning within him. And somehow or other, he went to sleep.

When he awoke and sought her with his hands she was not there. He jumped up and looked around. On every side desolation. The shadow of the willow had revolved to another place. The water gushed from the spring with an alarmed murmur. What had happened? He couldn't get his bearings. His horse raised its head, looked about and snorted. Kolyou's horse was gone, and so was Kolyou, and so was she.

They had run away.

He looked around like a wild man. On the white water trough he saw a bunch of blackberry twigs, heavy with fruit. Some one had picked them and forgotten them.

He reared like an ox enraged at the sight of the blood of a butchered comrade. He roared until he split the heavens in two. He put his hand on his knife, drew it out, waved it about and threw it in the middle of the road. He stooped down over it. The sharpened blade glistened. The moon rushed glinting along it and his whirling head rushed too. He fell upon his face and began to burrow in the ground with fingers stiffened into a claw. He bit the earth. He ate dirt.

He came to himself after the grey heavens had become red. His eyes were warmed as though he had made a visit to his mother's grave. Before him the wheat stalks were bathing, the fields were all aflame, behind them, over toward "the Huts" a little cloud of blue smoke was rising. He didn't start for "the Huts" but mounted his horse and struck across the field through the tall wheat toward the Danube. By evening he reached the city of Rouschouk (on the Bulgarian shore of the river), sold his horse and crossed over into Roumania.

The old man sighed. Before his eyes filed a long line of years during which he was a hired laborer in a strange land. He began to burrow with his fingers in

the dust heap of the past, hoping to find at least two warm eyes. Nine years he had met no one there. No one! His heart had turned within him.

At the end of nine years he went back to "the Huts." When he opened the gate of his father's yard an old dog vociferously barked at him. It sprang at him, then recognized him and stopped with wide open eyes. Under the mulberry tree he saw a little black-eyed girl with tousled hair. She was gathering little stones in her little skirt and gazing at him with open mouth.

"It was you, little Vellie."

Her uncle kissed her hand and forgave everything. Was it possible not to forgive his own brother?

Uncle Gheno once more leaned over Vella, who was breathing sweetly; then he wrapped her in his big coat and lay down beside her.

The black sky above weighed heavily upon him. A little coin, fallen from the most precious of all necklaces, was creeping toward an unknown land.

KOLARYD FARM

By ASTRID EHRENCRON KIDDE

(Danish)

I HAVE often thought it strange, even in a way unfair to me, that while during my whole life I have wished in vain to be permitted some day to see a Fata Morgana—this delicate and fairylike mirage of distant, always beautiful places—I have several times been haunted by visions of dismal events which were going to take place many years later, or by phantoms of terrors long past. I was never able to understand why just I was destined to be a witness to these weird happenings.

I have met these phantoms or omens of foul deeds on lonely paths in the dense forests; I have approached them as I would something living and tangible, seeing them in the parched wilderness between tufts of juniper and the black thujas. I have seen them slide past me in the motionless dead lakes, far up in the mountains.

Let me tell you something which happened to me when I was still young enough to want to understand these apparitions and solve enigmas which in later years I realized are not meant ever to be solved on this earth.

I was at the time twenty-eight years old and had just established myself as a lawyer in Laholm in Halland, after having lost the last one of those who were dear to me, and thus being left quite alone in this world. I had chosen this little desolate town because I no longer wanted human society, now that all were strangers to me, while my financial situation was such as to make me independent of any patronage.

One day toward the end of August, when I had been in this town for about a year, the thought came to me to take a short vacation as other people did, not because I had been burdened with other work than that which my brooding and morbid mind laid upon me daily, but rather as an excuse to spend a month or so in a still greater solitude than the small town with its thousand inhabitants could offer me. So I decided to start for a remote inn situated in the Klarelv valley, in a part of the country not yet overrun by the railway, where the means of communication consisted in a small boat starting at Edebäck station and reaching Svartbacka Inn on the border of Dalecarlia after a ten-hour journey.

I had to start at once, knowing that the Klarelv usually dried out towards the end of August, or at least became so shallow that all traffic had to stop; in this case one had to travel through the narrow valley slowly and laboriously by cariole, using horses in relays.

I arrived late in the evening of a mild, damp day in this the last month of summer, and found the inn to be a spacious but somber-looking wooden building; the heavy beams of the walls were of the color of a well seasoned meerschaum pipe, and seemed as old as the pine forest which closely surrounded the house.

There were no other guests in this bleak and solitary place. I was received by the proprietress, a youngish looking widow with thick, curly hair and a pair of sharp but honest eyes. Dragging at her skirts was a charming little girl, five or six years old, as light as a fairy, bashfully crossing and twisting her long bare legs under her short, light blue cotton dress.

In the course of the evening, however, this little fairylike creature lost so much of her bashfulness that she was able to show me the old garden whose rust-green pine trees with their tufted, waving tops, went way down to the river and seemed to be merely fore-runners of the tall mountain forest on the other side of the road.

My expectations concerning the place of my choice were not disappointed—on the contrary, they were greatly exceeded. I found here an inexhaustible, hidden world of untold solitude and secret beauty; every day I enjoyed wandering through regions which were not only strange to me, but whose paths seemed to have been forgotten and deserted by human feet through centuries. A forest world, still as death, with-

out the singing of birds or the blows of an axe—no stroke of an oar, no whistling of a lumberman was heard from the river which already had become too shallow to allow any transportation of pine trees or other lumber.

No matter how brightly the morning started, with long spears of sunshine over the steel blue spirals of the river, the moment I had left the narrow highway, and had passed under the black fir portals of the forest, it was as if I entered the mysterious shadow-realm of a distant, unknown planet, in which I was quite alone, without any hope of meeting a fellow being.

About three weeks after my arrival at Svartbacka I returned one evening at sunset from a day's wandering in the forests on the other side of the river. It had been a damp and sultry day without real rain, but with the continuous moisture spinning its gray web round everything and dimming all outlines. Although there were no clouds, the thunder made its nearness felt like an evil spirit; even the big silent wild birds in the forest had several times startled me by suddenly and nervously flitting from one pine to another.

And yet, when after my lonely supper in the big dining-room I leaned out of the window, inhaling the sweet aroma of the wild apples and the somewhat sickening, incense-like breath of the birches, a gentle calmness seemed to reign everywhere.

I felt tired after my long roaming, and was just

planning to go to bed when somebody knocked at the door to the hall.

I opened it and found the blond little girl outside, curtsying in her short blue skirt.

"There is a man who wants to speak to you, uncle," she said timidly and slipped away like a squirrel.

Naturally, I was astonished to hear that somebody should think of seeking me here, in this strange place; but my astonishment was to become still greater.

The man who had asked for me was standing below the stone stairway in the now almost dark yard. He was a tall, robust fellow with a hard and rigid face that reminded me of the carvings in old church pews. He wore a heavy gray suit of the kind generally worn by people in these regions, the so-called "gray-peasants." On his feet he had a pair of boots reaching to his knees. Near him stood an old cariole before which was a heavy horse quite out of proportion to the vehicle.

Before I had time to ask the man what he wanted, he revealed his errand.

He was to ask me to go with him to a farm in the woods on the other side of the river, the master of which was anxious to speak to me as the only lawyer in that part of the country.

Surprised, I asked him how he knew that I was a lawyer.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Master sent me," he answered shortly and sullenly.

I asked him why his master had not come himself and if his conference with me could not be postponed until the next day, as it was already late.

Again he shrugged his shoulders.

"I hardly think master will last that long," he said; "he is mighty ill."

I reflected for a moment. As before said, I felt unspeakably tired, and the very air, sultry as it was, seemed to weigh on my limbs as heavily as lead.

"Tell him that I shall come to him early tomorrow morning," I promised; "and give me exact directions about the location of the farm and the nearest way to it."

The fellow now gave me a very minute description of the way, which, to be sure, seemed rather complicated to me; but as I learned that there were no other farms near by which I could mistake for the right one, and as, moreover, I had to turn to the right at every branching of the path, I told myself that I could certainly find my way.

The man then lifted his cap sulkily, mounted the cariole with one long step, and rumbled out of the yard.

I went to bed at once, after having asked my landlady to awaken me early next morning.

But I could not sleep. I was constantly kept awake, now by one sound, now by another, either from the garden or from the beams in the walls around me. It seemed as if the old farm were stretching all its

joints throughout the night, sighing over its palsied limbs.

But also my own thoughts were keeping me awake. Time after time I had to think of the dying man who perhaps was just at the moment groaning with pain and worry, counting the hours before my arrival.

What did he want of me? And how had he found out that I was here?

And suddenly it became clear to me that I had to set out at once without delay. Had I any right to be resting in my bed when a dying man had called me? Whatever he had to tell me, it was his plainly stated wish that I and none other was to hear it, even though perhaps I should not be able to help him.

I dressed quickly, opened the window, and slid down to the ground.

The night was as silent as the day had been. No breath of wind stirred the pine tufts. The moon was not out, still it was so light that I could easily see everything around me.

I reached the ferry on the river, gave a call through my hollowed hands to the old ferryman, and at once saw that white-bearded Charon appear on the opposite shore and start the boat.

Five minutes later I had reached the narrow, stony road which was said to go over the mountain to the farm in question.

Strange to say, I had never before been on this road. The ferryman whom I had tried to sound about

the farm, answered me that he did not know it. He had come from Olsäter ferry farther down the river only a short time ago.

It was almost inconceivable that a vehicle, no matter how small, would be able to make its way on this path, through the dense forest; for the path was so narrow and hard to travel that at each step I felt the fir trees rustle as they closed behind me, like big night birds following me on heavy, flapping wings.

After about an hour this path disappeared almost entirely in a small furrow in which juniper and heather entangled my feet constantly, and several times made me stumble and almost fall. At last I discovered a turn to the right where at the same time the path widened somewhat. Now it went steeply upward among stones and ferns, until after another half hour I came to a clearing which, with its hundreds of yard-high tree stumps between yews and black thujas, resembled a graveyard with low and sunken monuments.

The man had spoken of this clearing, and I knew that I had to turn to the right here also without considering the fact that the path to the left looked more inviting and easier to travel.

But as I went on, looking up toward the fir tops in the hope of finding a small opening which might indicate the direction of the path, I stumbled over a stump, at the same time my foot slipped on the smooth heather and I fell forward on my face.

However, I got on my feet again quickly and went on.

I found all to be as the man had said. And after another half hour in which among other things I passed a little round glade, where the air and the black soil told me of the former existence of a charcoal-kiln, I caught sight of the farm.

It was situated on a knoll in the thicket, a little away from the path, and was partly enclosed by a half circle of high mountain ash covered with berries.

The day had begun to dawn; in the gray morning I saw the red clusters of berries speckled with black-birds which already in this early hour were busy eating. They did not seem scared by my appearance, but calmly continued their meal without heeding me more than if I had been a spirit or some other invisible being. The dwelling-house, only one story high, whose walls were completely covered with moss, was unusually long; but the windows were placed at such great distances from each other that there were only two on each side of the door.

At one of these windows I now caught a glimpse of the man who had come to see me the night before; I recognized at once his stiff, wooden features.

His face disappeared at once, however, evidently without his noticing me; a moment later I saw him come down the stone steps and go around to the side of the house, where I noticed that he stooped down to pick up something which he hid under his coat.

Just then he turned and looked me squarely in the face. But to my surprise he did not seem to heed me any more than the birds had done. He passed close to me and went on toward the stone steps. I followed him, said good morning, and asked him to take me to his master.

He did not answer me. He did not even turn around at the sound of my voice.

I gasped with sudden fright. Good Lord—who was I, or what was the matter with me, since nobody was aware of my presence?

After several vain attempts to attract his attention I followed him into the house.

From a vestibule we went through several rooms, all half dark, with lowered blinds, and apparently used as storerooms for all kinds of accumulated rubbish rather than as living-rooms for the owner of the farm.

At last my guide stopped outside a door which was ajar and led into a room on the east side of the house. He knocked, but opened the door right away, without waiting for a summons to enter. I followed him in my mysterious, unheeded incognito.

Here, too, it was dark. But in the very moment we entered I saw through a strange glimmer from the green curtains, a man raising himself on his elbow in a big four-poster near the wall, with an energy which one would not have thought possible in a sick person.

“Have you brought the lawyer along, Bertil?” asked the patient.

The other man laughed. A short and scornful laugh.

"Why, no," he answered. "I did not go to any lawyer. You don't go to lawyers at night. I was asleep in the larder. But I dreamt that I went down to that fellow in Svartbacka inn. Won't that be enough for you? You will have to rest satisfied with that, Master."

The sick man fell back in the pillows with a groan. The hired man stood there staring and holding his hand against his coat, as if afraid to lose whatever he had hidden under it when I saw him outside.

I went to the bed and bent over the sick man. "See, here I am," I said and stretched out my hand.

But he did not see me, and his hand did not seize mine.

I shuddered. "Merciful Heaven," I whispered, "do you not see or hear me?"

Everything remained silent. The husbandman was gazing with wide open eyes toward the ceiling, and the hired man started at his master without moving, still holding his coat pressed to his chest, as if afraid that something might slip out under it.

I, too, stood motionless, paralyzed by a nameless terror.

What was the matter with me? Had my fall in the forest caused my death, and was my ghost haunting this strange farm?

But now the hired man spoke again.

"Now be reasonable, Master," he said, "and let's

hear where you hid the money—I have richly deserved it. Haven't I toiled and drudged faithfully in this cursed forest year after year, though I was always set on going to sea and seeking my fortune in foreign countries? And now you want to call in lawyer and magistrate and will all your savings to a daughter whom you turned out because she was a hussy. But for all you care, I may die in the field like the dog I have been in your eyes all my life."

The sick man did not answer. He frowned, and shook his head helplessly and impatiently.

"Now be reasonable, Master," repeated the other, "or you will have to pay for it, here and in the other world when you want the big gate-keeper to admit you to heaven. There you will be called to account for cheating a poor man and driving him to a reckless deed. I want only half—do you hear me, man? You are not dying; you may live a good many years longer and then die with a clear conscience."

"Silence," cried the master, "do not speak of conscience! God help you if you are ever tortured by your conscience as I am by mine! Whether I shall die now or later is in God's hand. But before hoping for mercy in the other world I must make good what I have sinned down here."

The hired man stepped up to the bed. Then he took his hand away from his coat. He opened it wide to both sides, until it looked like the widespread wings of a big, gray bird. I saw his mouth broaden to a

terrible smile, as he whispered: "Look here, Bengt Brolander!"

The dying man and I glanced simultaneously at the fellow's belt, where we perceived a short, broad-bladed axe stuck through the strap.

The master again raised himself on his elbow.

"What are you going to do, Bertil?" he said with a shudder. "Your master."

"I am going to find out where the money is hidden," answered the fellow. "If you die now, she is not going to get it, because nobody knows where it is. If you live she will not get it either. So now—do you want to live or to die?"

I heard the sick man groan. But I stood there as a wooden statue, helplessly, mysteriously robbed of any power to make myself known or arrest the course of events.

I stretched out my hand and seized the axe—but I could not move it from his belt.

The master lay silent for a while. Then he whispered:

"Down in Kristinehamn, at the end of Spelmansgatan, is the old courthouse. It has been standing empty for about a hundred and fifty years. The plot around it is overgrown with weeds. Nobody is denied admission, for nobody wants to be admitted. Under the third birch to the left of the gate leading to the creek—that is where I hid the money. When we came from the Northlands, twenty years ago."

At this instant I saw the flash of the axe as it flew out from the scoundrel's belt. Two cries mingled in spite of their difference—one of agony, the other of triumph.

ONE OF THE CLAUQUE

By CARLO LINATI

(Italian)

THE other evening I took a stall at the Teatro Massimo for the first performance of an opera by a young composer. It did not seem as if this opera was likely to have a great success: the newspapers had announced it in a very offhand way, only mentioning the subject and the author's name, which was quite unknown. And indeed I had only gone to hear it because I wanted to refresh myself with a little music after the boredom of a long journey on business.

Unfortunately I had relied too much upon my powers of attention. The first act went well. The novelty of the scene and the fairly fluent melody kept me alert and attentive to the close. But in the second act—well, it may have been due to the darkness of the theatre or the fatigue of the journey, but the fact remains that by the middle of the act I was fast asleep.

Heavens knows when I should have waked up had not a violent nudge from my right-hand neighbour restored me suddenly to reality. The lights were up, and the audience was feebly clapping a singer in high boots and plumes who was bowing his thanks from

the middle of the footlights. At that moment I got another dig in the ribs together with a peremptory command to clap. I turned round extremely annoyed and found at my side a man on his feet clapping hard and shouting "Bravo! Bravo!" at the singer. Hardly had the curtain come down when he said to me: "Damn it all, why didn't you clap? You know we've got to make this opera go."

With a look of stupefaction I answered: "My dear sir, having paid twenty-five lire for my seat, I clap when I please."

The stranger stooped to look at me and then, clapping his open hand to his forehead, exclaimed in accents of sincerest regret: "Oh, I beg your pardon! I thought you were one of the *claque*. I've damned well put my foot in it. Fearfully sorry, so awfully sorry."

"That's all right," I answered mollified. "I see it was a pure mistake, and of course I accept your apologies. And so, you are a *claqueur*?"

"At your service," he said with a bow, "and since this last row of stalls is usually reserved for the members of our society, I naturally took you for one of our boys. There are a good many. You really do forgive me, I hope?"

"Of course, freely."

"Thanks," he said, offering me his hand.

I felt a sudden desire to get a more thorough knowledge of my honest *claqueur* and so, making up my mind not to let him escape me, I invited him to have

a drink. He accepted, and we were soon sitting in two wicker chairs in front of a round table on the terrace of the theatre's café.

I was then able to observe him at leisure. He was a man of about fifty, thin, tall, dressed in black; and, in spite of a certain refinement, his behaviour somehow or other showed that he was accustomed to occupations needing dexterity and suppleness. But what most struck me about him was the aristocratic look of his face—a long bony face, ending in a little pointed grey beard. Two flickering eyes, an aquiline nose and a high forehead with hardly a line on it gave him a curious likeness to some historical character whose name for the moment I could not remember.

"I suppose," I said, to resume the conversation, "that it would not be easy to learn the secrets of a profession so strange and hard to learn as yours."

"I am glad," he answered with a smile, "that you seem to understand all the dignity and greatness of our profession. We *claqueurs* are usually so much maligned!"

"Of course."

"Ah, yes," he went on, tapping me confidentially on the knee. "All the same, I've got quite fond of the business, though I've not been at it long."

"And what did you do before?"

"What do you think? I was a spring-fitter in the Spring Ottoman Co. And then—but it's a long story. Besides, the *claque* is like any other art; you can't

get into it all at once. You need maturity, ability and experience."

"I expect your story is full of interest," I said. "I confess I am extremely curious to hear it. Am I indiscreet?"

He smiled again: "You won't be bored?"

"Certainly not. Come, start away, I am all attention." My *claqueur* took a draught of beer, and began his story without further ceremony.

"If you had known me, sir, but two years ago, you might have admired me as the perfect model of a peaceful, industrious artisan. You smile. But adjusting springs is really an easy job. You can't think how many spring ottomans get broken every year in Milan, the moral capital of Italy. However, once when I was working a workshop near the Canal, I began to get rheumatic pains in the foot, from the damp that came through the walls. Being young, at first I paid no attention, but as the rheumatism quickly grew worse it induced me to submit to a cure. Or rather, being a man of about thirty and needing a more healthy and regular life, I decided to marry a wife and set up house on my own.

"And so I did. With my sober ways and my decent wages it was no trouble to win the heart of a nice girl whom I had met at a family party. As soon as we were married we took three little rooms on the fifth floor of a suburban house. Here we lived happily

for some years. My Sandro had brought a small sum as her dowry which, together with my wages, enabled us to get along comfortably and even to save up a few pennies for the future. It was too good to last; at that rate I should have reached Paradise in no time. The years passed away, but not my rheumatism, which from time to time gave me worse and worse pain, with ugly swellings at the joints. At last, one fine morning, when I got out of bed, I could not stand up. I knew then that I had the gout.

"In despair I tried every remedy, leeches, plasters, Beecham's pills, and doses of antimony. All useless. The pain gave me no rest, but attacked me every day with greater violence. And so it was that one day, at my wits' end what to do I resolved to try a medicine the wonders of which I had read in the advertisement columns of the *Herald*. Will you believe it? The experiment was a miraculous success. At the end of a few weeks I was absolutely cured.

"Bursting with gratitude, I sent the inventor a long letter full of enthusiasm and thanks, and I enclosed my photograph. What was my astonishment next day to see my letter with an enlargement of my photo reproduced on the last page of our great daily! You can imagine how delighted I was in my innocent vanity to gloat over this ancient grandee's face of mine, and to think that thousands of readers were looking at it too."

Here I interrupted him to say: "Yes, of course, you

certainly have an ancient grandee's face; a sort of— what shall I say, historical, sixteenth-century— In fact, one might say you looked very like—”

“One moment!” put in my *claqueur*. “In a minute I will tell you what my unhappy face is like, but let us take things in their proper order.”

After another sip he went on: “So there was I, living contented with my work and my domestic happiness, till one fine day I received a note from the manager of the Babylonia Films, Ltd., the big cinema company whose name you must know, asking me to call at the office for very urgent reasons. Well, next day I went. There, in a study furnished with oriental elegance I found seated at a sumptuous writing-table a grey, clean-shaven gentleman with an eyeglass and a flower in his buttonhole. He greeted me with the most effusive manner in the world and made me sit in the arm-chair at his side. Then, taking from a drawer a large engraving, he immediately gave it to me to look at.

“It was a full-length portrait of a historical character, gorgeously dressed in brocade, sixteenth-century fashion.

“‘Do you know this gentleman?’ he asked.

“‘Never seen him.’

“‘It is Cæsar Borgia.’

“‘Pleased to meet him,’ I said with a bow.

“‘Well,’ my interlocutor went on, ‘you, sir, have a

strong, quite extraordinarily strong and delightful likeness to this formidable person.'

"I looked at him with some perplexity, but he continued:

" 'Yesterday, when I saw your charming portrait on the last page of the *Herald* I had a suspicion of this, but now, my dear sir, that I have the pleasure of having you here before me in flesh and blood, I see it is an absolute dead certainty. Pardon me, please stand up.'

"I stood up. 'Yes,' he said, 'now turn three-quarter face.' I did so. 'Good. Now please turn round again.' I obeyed. 'Splendid, splendid!' he exclaimed, with a burst of exaltation. 'My ideal Valentino! My perfect Borgia!'

"I thought he had gone mad, when he made me sit down again and drew his chair up to mine.

" 'Now, listen,' he said. 'As you know, I am the manager of one of the largest film companies in the world.

" 'Babylonia Films Ltd., in fact.'

" 'Yes. Now the Babylonia is just about to produce a mammoth film in which will be depicted the adventures, passions and crimes of the famous bastard of Alexander VI. It will be a colossal affair, of quite unique importance. It will be the success of the season and one of the biggest things of the century. Everything is ready, scenes, costumes, actors, crowds,

everything, except one thing. We are held up for want of a Cæsar Borgia. In fact—' here he hesitated and then blurted out, 'we are held up for want of you, my friend.'

"I looked surprised.

" 'If you only knew,' he went on, waving his hands, 'all the trouble I have taken, all the frightful bother and worry I've had in trying to find my ideal Cæsar Borgia! I've beaten the town from end to end, I've combed out every possible place, the drawingrooms, the theatres, the clubs, the gambling hells; I've wildly searched every street and piazza; and no luck, none at all. Yesterday I had really given the thing up as a bad job when my lucky star made me look at your picture on the last page of the *Herald*. A fine picture, too! In a flash, when I saw that photo, I thought to myself, "That's the boy, that's the boy for Borgia!" So now, to be brief, will you undertake this rather terrible part?'

"I tell you, the man looked as if he were on absolute tenterhooks of anxiety. As he waited for my reply, he even poured me out a glass of liqueur brandy. As I drank the brandy, a strange new light seemed to break over me. I thought how often I had sued the favours of blind fortune in vain at the lottery shop; I thought how wretched and dull and dreary my life had been up to now. After another glass of brandy I felt still nearer to making up my mind. However, I said:

" 'But, Mr. Manager, I know nothing about gesture, acting or deportment.'

" 'That doesn't matter,' he answered. 'You'll have heaps of time to learn what is necessary.'

"I paused again. Then I said:

" 'You know I am a foreman and get good wages.'

" 'You'll forget about that with the money we pay you.'

" 'For instance?'

" 'Fifteen thousand francs, all in.'

" 'But I'm a married man, sir—'

" 'Well, eighteen thousand.'

" 'But my relations. They are church people, bless them, and—'

" 'Nineteen thousand!' the man snapped back.

"Well, at twenty thousand I thought it wise to suppress all further objections. Then the manager, afraid that I should give him the slip, took a contract-form out of his drawer, filled in the figures and read it to me. It was all correct. I signed.

"Next day, having got leave from Spring Ottoman Co., I went with the manager to the studio of the Babylonia Films where my fellow-actors were introduced to me. I had the great pleasure of shaking hands with my father, Pope Alexander VI, a very shabby porter with a large double chin, with my sister Lucretia, a pretty woman of about thirty with an abundantly papal bust, with King Louis XII, Trivulzio, Alfonso

d'Este, Bentivoglio, Lodovico il Moro, Savonarola, Consalvo and all the crowd of cardinals and petty princes of the Romagna, most of whom had been fished up by the indefatigable manager out of every conceivable kind of Bohemian backwater and theatrical underworld in Milan.

"The manager read the scenario and gave out the parts. It was then that I was able to realize with admiration all the inhuman power of that arch-ruffian whom I was about to represent. Thenceforward I thought of nothing else, I practised nothing else but getting into the skin of that picturesque tyrant. I read Machiavelli's *The Prince* and *The Discourse on the Manner in which Duke Valentine murdered the Gentlemen of Romagna*; after which I ransacked Guicciardini and Lord knows how many other historians, ancient and modern. I attempted then, with the aid of all this reading and still more with my own intuition, to substitute the mind of this cruel, ambitious man for my own. As I walked along the street I imagined the life of the sixteenth century around me, a society full of factions, noisy crowds, the clash of swords, oaths and blasphemies, tumults and bloody faces. I did all I could to look at the world with the eye of a destroyer. At the same time I did Mûller's exercises every day to take down my fat and give me a slender figure; and I passed long hours in front of a looking-glass trying over and over again the gestures of command, of seduction and of drunken orgy. After

this course of training, I went to the Babylonia and got into my doublet and hose.

"It was a delightfully mad life, sir. Such a whirl of wild gesticulations, extravagant attitudes and splendid scenes—cardboard towers, selenium moonlight, and turbulent crowds of cavaliers, condottieri and yelling courtiers who played up to my acts of stupendous cruelty!

"You should have seen my proud carriage when I had myself crowned Duke of Valence by Louis XII; and with what imperial pomp, mounted upon my bay with gold trappings, I entered the conquered cities of Romagna and passed at the head of my seven hundred 'Broken lances' between a double row of kneeling people; how I imposed new rulers upon cities; how I ordered massacres, and robbed treasuries. You should just have seen with what a gesture of refined cruelty I ordered the strangling of Astorre Manfredi in the dungeons of Castel Sant' Angelo, and with what a satanic leer I made the women of Capua, when I had sacked and burnt their city, pass naked before me before I consigned them to my Roman harem!"

"And how," I interrupted, "did you manage to reconcile a wife like yours to all these deviltries?"

"A Borgia,"—he answered with a smile—"gets out of such difficulties with perfect ease. . . . When the work was done, I took off my ducal robes, put on my workman's jacket and went quietly back to the sweets of family life. I can't tell you how nice it seemed."

"The film was shown in one of the large theatres of Milan before a large and distinguished public. It was a triumph. My tigerish expression and my diabolical smiles were particularly popular, and everybody praised the refinement and vigour of my performance.

"Two nights later I came home resolved at last to confess my new career to Sandra. She was not at home; but she came in very soon, like a hurricane, crying, 'I'll divorce you, I'll divorce you!'

"'My dear Sandra,' I said.

"But she went on rushing up and down the room like a madwoman shouting 'divorce, divorce!' Then she stopped still suddenly and fixed me with a serpent's glance: 'Yes, I've been to that den of corruption too and seen you on the screen! Disgusting! Filthy! Do you suppose I'm going on living with a man who has had a dozen people strangled, indulges in devilish orgies, and has robbed, betrayed or murdered millions! Get away, you loathsome villain!'

"I tried to calm her, but it was only waste of breath. She got into such a fury that she rushed at me and tried to scratch my eyes out. Then all at once she became quiet, ran to the chest of drawers, took out a little money, and then, wrapping herself in her shawl, she flounced out of the room with 'I'm off to mother's!'

"That was the first blow; and I didn't have to wait long for the second. Next day, as I went out, I found all my wife's relations gathered on the doorstep, and

one of her uncles comes up with a frown and roars out at me.

“‘Nothing you could have done could have given more outrageous offence to all the family, nice, decent, Christian church-going folk, and well you knew it. We have all decided to take back into the family this poor girl who, to her sorrow and ours, has for some years been your wife. We are all thoroughly ashamed of your disgraceful behaviour and hope we shall never in this world see your face again.’ Whereupon they all turned their backs on me and went off.

“It was moral ruin. I had lost my wife, my job, and the esteem of my relations. What could I do? Luckily I still had to my credit the glory of my success, the hope of future gains and fifteen out of the twenty thousand francs. And so, partly to drown my sorrow, partly through certain habits I had got into at the cinema, I began to spend money madly, in a crescendo of extravagance. The film was a huge success. My name was on everybody’s lips and I was proclaimed everywhere as the most brilliant rising star in the film sky. I even came to believe it myself, and was glad to profit by this moment of celebrity to satisfy my personal vanity to the utmost. I was dressed by the best tailor in Milan, dined at the most expensive restaurants, and was always to be found in the smartest resorts and gambling hells. And if the savagery of my Borgian attitudes had disgusted my good little wife, they were extremely popular with certain fine ladies and women

of the town who frequented the most hectic haunts of dubious gallantry. I took my ducal figure round the bars and dance-halls, and every one admired it; I had a gang of toadies and adorers; profiteers competed for it at their parties: you might almost say they snatched it from one another. I had violent love affairs with aristocratic dames, I had flirtations and escapades with tempestuous young women of all shades. I was the hero of several scandals and withstood with socratic calmness the threats of at least three duels. In this manner, trusting always in my lucky star, at the end of three months I had spent every penny I had.

"Broke to the world, but sure of being able to make another fortune quickly with my gifts, I went back to the manager of the Babylonia Films. 'Here I am again,' I said, lounging into the armchair beside his desk, 'ready to create another historical villain.'

"But the fellow, who was doing laborious accounts in a ledger, looked at me crossly over his spectacles and said: 'I'm really very sorry, but I've nothing for you.'

" 'Do you mean it?' I answered.

" 'For the moment we are full up.'

" 'That's all very well, my dear sir,' I retorted, 'but look here, I've made a big hit in the crime stuff, as you know. Wouldn't it be as well to take advantage of my special line? While you can,' I added softly, 'or one of the big American firms may get me any moment.'

"The manager did not seem at all disturbed by this threat. I was annoyed. 'Damn it all,' I cried, 'I

should have an immense success as Torquemada, for instance, or the wizard Cagliostro, or Jack the Ripper or the Emperor Nero. Can't you see that those parts would suit me down to the ground?'

" 'Blood and thunder films,' the manager interrupted sharply, 'have had their day. Now everybody wants faultless evening dress, foxtrots and sentiment. Moods change in the cinema as much as in any other field of human activity.'

" 'But my face doesn't change, my good man,' I broke in crossly. 'A good aristocratic, tragic, emotional face.'

"He looked at me a moment over his spectacles and said:

" 'Your tragic, emotional face would look simply rotten in a set of the Riviera or the ballroom of the Savoy. What we want now is the smart society face, the nut, you know, with slinky hair.'

" 'But I could make up.'

" 'What would be the good? The public would smell out their old Borgia under the wig and the paint, and kick up the devil of a row. No do-ups for me, thank you. It would ruin your reputation. No, no, believe me, you had better go home with your face and keep it there.'

"I said good-bye and rushed down the stairs.

"From that moment I was fairly in the soup. I went to other managers and offered them all the rich

promise of my vast talent. In vain. All the parts were full, and the chief obstacle to my engagement was always simply my face—my famous face now known in every cinema under the sun. Wherever I took it I found they were fed up with Borgia.

“Sick to death of art in general and of history in particular I went back to the Spring Ottomans Co. Nothing doing there, for the factory was closed for want of customers. Then I had to look for any sort of a job to earn a living. Long faces and refusals everywhere. Times were bad, and the streets were full of unemployed, hungry and discontented. I had to sell the furniture of my little flat and pawn my mistresses’ rings. I lived thus for a week or so the life of a vagabond and idler, and learnt what it was to spend whole afternoons on a bench in the park talking with street-singers and ruined inventors.”

Here my *claqueur* stopped for a moment. He leaned back and sadly contemplated his finger-nails. I took advantage of this pause to order another drink. We said “Here’s luck” and drank together. Then he resumed his tale.

“One evening I was wandering, lonely and hungry, along the pavement of the Corso, when I saw a man dressed in grey who was walking with the slow, dragging step of one who is used to trudging the streets all day long and never gets a square meal at the end of

it. I saw him cross the Corso, and take the street along the Canal. He followed it slowly, keeping close to the parapet. Was he thinking of finding in those waters the *dénouement* of his wretched tragedy? I don't know. When he arrived at the Monforte bridge, he stopped, pulled out a pipe and filled it. I came up to him and offered him a match. By the light of the flame I recognized him.

" 'Why, it's Vitellozzo Vitelli!'

" 'My old friend Duke Valentino!'

"He was an old cinema pal, who had acted in 'Borgia.' I took his arm and we told each other in turn the story of our misfortunes. He too, poor chap, after many ups and downs, was doing the hunger march. And so, recalling the well-paid glories of our brilliant past, we cheered each other up a little; and in about half an hour we had arrived at the outskirts of the city without noticing it.

" 'Where are we going now?' I asked.

" 'Don't be afraid, duke,' said Vitellozzo. 'Let's take this lane between the fields. In a moment I will stand you the best glass of Chianti in all Milan.'

"In fact in a little while, we came in sight of the Osteria del Lepre. We went in under a lighted pergola and when we were seated at a stone table, Vitellozzo ordered a bottle. For some time we sat in silence, drowning our sorrow in the good wine, when we suddenly heard the jingle of bells from the street. A pony-

trap stopped in front of the inn, and a stout little man with a round, jolly face bounced out of it. Tying up the horse he came in, humming a tune.

"‘Why, it’s *El Barlassina!*’ exclaimed Vitellozzo, starting up and embracing the newcomer. It was the celebrated tenor, Tovini, called *El Barlassina* by the Milanese, from the name of his native village—a cheery soul always ready with a joke. Now, after a triumphant career he had reached his fortieth year, and when he sang in Milan he never forgot to come for a game of *bocce* to the Osteria del Lepre, where he had some old acquaintances. However, that evening, after we had allowed him to win a game and half a bottle of Chianti had put him into a confidential mood, he confessed that things were not going so well with him as they used. His voice was failing and engagements were few. Besides, the devil of a Portuguese tenor had just sprung up who had sworn to have his blood, because the management had given Tovini the part of Pollione which he said belonged to him. The first performance of the opera was to take place, in fact, that evening, and a great row was expected. It was known that the Portuguese had hired a body of ruffians to hiss Tovini.

"‘And so, friends,’ said the tenor, ‘I don’t know how I shall come out of it. I ought to have some counter-stroke ready.’

"‘As for that,’ answered Vitellozzo, who had been listening with grave attention, ‘what about us? Try

us, and see if we don't give those old Portuguese a lesson.'

"The tenor was radiant at the proposal, and promised us a nice little sum if we succeeded in carrying him through.

" 'I shall expect you tonight at the theatre,' he concluded, as he jumped into his trap and went off.

"That evening there was a sharp battle between the supporters of the Portuguese and those who applauded Tovini. We had enrolled a few friends and sprinkled them about the theatre. Not a single high note or modulation of Tovini's passed unobserved by the audience in spite of the hisses of the opposite side. In short, the audience was quite carried away, and the hissing began to lose ground. In a rage they began to whistle openly, but the audience resented it, and we had a free hand to come in ourselves with more and more decisive applause and completely master the situation. The performance ended with a perfect ovation to Tovini, whose engagement was confirmed the next day.

"Thenceforth our star was in the ascendant. Delighted with our unsuspected talent as *claqueurs*, Tovini proposed that we should follow him wherever he sang, hoping for new triumphs after that excellent reappearance in Milan. Unfortunately, engagements failed to come. In spite of that last success, the career of the celebrated tenor had reached its close.

"Too proud to put up with minor parts and too

harum-scarum to be a singing-teacher, the good fellow thought of assisting the lyric art in another way, and proposed that we should form a regular society in which, as in some great foreign cities, the profession of the *claque* should be raised to the dignity of a perfect and conscientious art. He would be the head of the concern and furnish the capital. As you may imagine, the announcement of an enterprise of this kind published throughout the theatrical world aroused the enthusiasm of all the composers, dramatists, singers and actors who sail the wintry seas of opera and drama. Our society was quickly founded. It had a headquarters, and a large body of warm adherents. I shared the management with Tovini, and Vitellozzo contented himself with the post of secretary.

"And that, sir, is the story of my adventures. It seems a little improbable, perhaps?"

"Just a little," I said. "But . . . tell me one thing . . . your wife?"

"Oh, my new profession suited her far better. Sandra, in spite of her prudery, was a good sort, and she came to make allowances for my waywardness."

"So now, in fact, you have completely settled down."

"Touch wood!" he said, as he got up. I paid, and we went back into the theatre where the bell was already ringing for the beginning of the third act.

JAN-JAN

By FREDERICK MARCELIN

(French)

ON the shore of the tropical sea where the foot sinks lightly in the fine soft sand, lies indolently the little Haitian port of Arcahaie. Fringed by deep green islands of mangroves, the Bay of Port-au-Prince stretches westward, blue, calm, at rest—a picture of the hospitable people living on its shores.

When their boats come in, the village fishermen gather at the rude wharf shaded by the magnificent foliage of palms and breadfruits, to remove their nets. There, the masters of the sailing boats that ply their trade among the coral shoals make anew their packs of Guinea grass and strings of fish, better to deceive the eye of the customer. There, bunches of bananas and plantains, so essential for Port-au-Prince's daily food supply, are stored till the next sailing. And twice a week, beneath these trees, a small fair or market is held. Hard-working Syrians, natives of Beyrouth, coming from Saint-Marc, the last town to the north, unpack their bundles of notions and dry goods to bargain with the shrewd housewives, much to the amusement and sport of the younger girls.

From this rough timber wharf, soothed by the everlasting song of the sea, far away among glossy-leaved coffee trees and wide-spreading mangoes, the burg houses are seen; inartistic abodes with thatched roofs, and small orchards generally fenced by gun-tree poles that strike root as soon as planted. Some gardens are enclosed by cactus hedges while others have only a thick fence of wooden stakes stuck in the ground. Each house has, almost at the door, several beautiful plaintains, whose shoots, restless with sap, lift up the pavement of the porch. By bringing the tree nearer to the family, the peasant does homage to its Fosterer, which, multiplying its gifts, is never wearied in its generous production. He pays it reverence as to a household god and, in turn, the plant seems to accept, patronizing the home. At the least puff of the breeze, its large oily leaves repeat to the peasant in their familiar lullaby the maternal promise "Thanks to me, you will never die of want."

In one of the cottages, in the midst of the village, lived Jan-Jan and his old mother. The father had died many years ago leaving, contrary to the general case in our country, this only son. The mother had done her best for his education, sending him to school about three times a week. He could read, count, and nearly write. He did not spell well, but, this detail excepted—which was not very important in his condition—he did not need any help to give a receipt for the sale of a goat or, at the last of the year, to

address a letter of "long life and good wishes" to his goodfather, who, having left Arcahaie, managed at Leogane an important tafia plant. Had it been his desire, Jan-Jan could have filled a clerk's position at the court at Boucassin, chief village of the rural section. Doubtless it would be necessary for him to know by heart certain Latin formulas of general use in legal papers—but he had a retentive memory so this could not have stopped him. But, alas! honors did not tempt him; he preferred to remain a peasant as his father had been.

Moreover, he had quite enough money to live. Aside from the barge which brought to market his plantains and Guinea grass, he owned the hut where he and his mother lived. He had also some live-stock, but was ambitious to add a cow to his goats, hogs and sheep. To realize this, it would be necessary to sell the horse, but, although his mother advised this, he could not spare the animal, a luxury which served him on holidays and Sundays after Mass to show off his ability as a rider before the girls of the place, of whom one particularly for many months had attracted his attention. Her name was Philomen, called for short Memen. Her mother was dead. She lived with her father who kept the best pot-house in the village, a small iron-roofed place near the church. She was a nice-looking girl with sparkling eyes, plump and fairly set up on solid hips. She pleased by a merry temperament and a happy laugh, showing glittering white teeth

in a fresh mouth. You might say that she was much of a flirt and a bit frivolous, but this had been acquired by some months passed in Port-au-Prince at her aunt's house. Oh! these towns!— But nobody there was narrow-minded. They thought that, once married, she would make a perfect match for any husband. Besides, household duties and the many children she could not fail to have—considering her splendid figure—would take her time, leaving none for trifles.

Mr. Manmy, her father, was by his social position an important personage in the burgh. He even played a leading rôle. This was particularly manifested on Sundays, after Mass, when everybody came to his house and sipped a small glass of tafia or a cup of punch. On these days, Philomen Manmy, having attended the holy service, stopped for a few minutes in the hall. Her coming increased the warmth and humor of men and boys and raised the consumption. On working days, the tavern was little patronized, everybody toiling in the fields. With the exception of one or two idle fellows, old or useless, there were no regular tipplers in the prosperous little nook.

Owing to the fact that all news was first known in his house and that social life, sleeping six days, awoke there on the seventh, Manmy was the spindle, the axis of the community. He gave advice on everything: harvest, good weather, rainfall, price of bananas and plantains, drought and opportunities for market-

ing. He was listened to respectfully, first because he spoke of things he did not know—having no experience with crops—in life such advisers have always many followers; second, because he was the father of Memen. Among those markedly attentive to approve his lectures, two might be singled out by the eagerness of their “Yes, Mr. Manny—How right you are, Mr. Manmy. How true it is, Mr. Manmy.” They were Jan-Jan and Jasmin Larose.

If Jan-Jan was younger, smarter and the better rider, if he handled more boldly the oar or the machette, Larose, who had long passed his twenties, whose figure was already bent and slightly limping—this fact had enabled his rival to nickname him mockingly “Ti-Soufri” (Sickly thing)—Larose had larger and better cultivated coffee fields interplanted with bananas. Moreover, he owned many cows and two horses and did not fail to call attention to the fact that a girl engaged to him “would never go on foot, she would have her horse all dressed up.” These are advantages appreciated as much in Arcahaie as in Port-au-Prince . . . or elsewhere.

However, Jan-Jan was not much affected, youth being generally confident and optimistic, but he watched closely the foe, decided not to lose one inch of the ground and to go right to the end of the adventure whatever might happen.

Neither Memen nor Manmy showed any preference. They greeted and welcomed both lovers, attentive to

keep them on the same line, *ex æquo*. If asked to tell his opinion, Manmy would say: "Both suit me, Memen will choose." And Memen would answer the question by chastely casting her eyes down and murmuring that such things must not be asked of girls. By degrees the village was taking the deepest interest in the contest. One party sided with Jan-Jan and the other of about the same importance with Larose. Each Sunday, after Mass, they drew aside under the Mapu tree at the middle of the place and there looked each other up and down and strove to read into Memen's face to see if the scales leaned on one side or on the other. From the last ringing of the bell, the men come on horseback, machette hanging from the waist, hastening to their animals. Then, Memen would be in sight at the porch, her cambric dress thoroughly starched, soughing gently. Immediately, nimble-footed Jan-Jan darted, flew, to meet her, asking news of her health, how she liked the weather, how pretty she was in her beautiful attire. "Truly, a dress cannot be called starched that is not prepared by you." Larose, less quick, followed, repeating about the same thing. Memen, for her part, delivered exactly the same smile, the same lackadaisical gestures to both. And everybody took the way of the pot-house either on foot or on horseback. Manmy ran to the porch, tied the halter of the animals to the fence poles, shook hands with the suitors and every possible drinker. Ceremoniously, he bade them enter into the small room and,

under the crash of bottles and glasses, he prophesied about rainfall, good weather and harvest.

Well, the week before the Sunday on which our story is taking place was particularly agitated in the village. They spoke only of "hasty offensive" because both rivals were decided to strike a great blow. They were gone to town to purchase the gifts that, according to the Arcahaie custom, once accepted by the girl pledged her faith forever: she ought to wear ostensibly at Mass the gift of the approved lover. Jan-Jan sent an armlet in golden silver, Jasmin Larose a splendid collar of the most beautiful coral he was able to find at the Grand Bazar. "Which is the winner?" every one asked himself anxiously during the week, the collar or the armlet?

At last, Sunday came. . . . But, to the general stupefaction, after Mass Memen appeared, the neck adorned with the gorgeous collar and the left arm glittering with the golden bracelet.

What is the meaning of this? What does she wish? Does she covet the two men? If she did not want any of them, was it not her duty to return both collar and armlet? Each looker-on stood on tiptoe to see better and not lose anything of what was bound to happen. Memen, smilingly, was drawing nigh. Did she trample down the old customs? Did she think that what is good to take is also good to keep?

Jan-Jan and Jasmin had been stuck to the ground by a painful surprise. They stared at the girl; she

was engaged to both men, she wore both gifts. They could not understand. Suddenly, they faced each other and anger filled their souls, the old blood of the Ashanti, their African ancestors, started up out of its three-century sleep. They rushed on their horses and pulling the machette out of the long leather case, ran furiously one against the other. A great cry was uttered by the whole company. Memen swooned. Then, an old, white-bearded man dashed between the fighters, whose steeds, hotly spurred, disclosed in neighing their scarlet gums.

"What is the cause of this fighting?" said he. "Of what use will it be to have your heads cut off? Are you mad to bear each other a grudge for a disappointment that reaches both of you? I admit with you that what I have seen is abnormal. It never happened in this community, but you must settle the matter properly; you may even help Memen to understand things a little better. She cannot keep both the collar and the armlet; it would be immoral. I make it my business to solve this without blows. Put up your machettes, boys, and follow me at Manmy's."

The man speaking so judiciously was named Aristote Adam, more commonly known as "Conciliator," with suppression of the article before the substantive. Like Manmy, but in another way, he was a social authority. He cleared up all difficulties, soothed all resentments and softened all hatreds. He used to say: "After fighting you will come to an understanding,

then why not begin by it without cutting your throats first? Agreement is always better than fighting." He had kept the same language at all times and at every opportunity. It was the program of his life. He stood the very man to put his acts in harmony with his sayings. When many years ago the judge at Boucassin, coming back from a trip to Port-au-Prince, told that the State Secretary for Justice had informed him quite informally that all nations of the world agreed to suppress war and institute an international Court for the settlement of their quarrels and that Haiti was to send a delegate to this Court, all Arcahayans met in a common belief: the right man to choose, is Aristote Adam. But, as they were probably unaware at the Department of State that there was still a man to conform his acts to his words, Aristote was left in Arcahaie.

The "Conciliator," a crowd on his steps, reached the tavern. He placed the two rivals each at one end of the table, one in front of the other. You could hear from the neighboring room the sighs of Memen, brought in by friends holding her by the armpits. She made no answer to the anxious "How are you?" "Do you feel better now?" of the women and kept her eyes stubbornly closed.

"Dear friends," declared Aristote, "we will stake Philomene Manmy at dice. She cannot decide; well, Fate will decide for her. That's the best way to solve the problem. How many wars, havocs and ruins could

have been avoided if dice were taken to settle quarrels? In the present case, thanks to them, two worthy boys, honor and ornament of the city, will not cut each other's throats. Is it not the best solution? Do you not prefer its pacifism to the homicidal machette? What, did I say "homicidal"? No, the machette is not homicidal; it was not made to cut throats, but to weed fields and harvest sugar cane. It is an instrument of peace, not an arm for murder. Do not turn it aside from its destination. Friends, compare the results: in the first place, no matter which boy would triumph, we have to shed tears or at least to stop blood; in the second place, we have a "grog" or a punch to drink—at the winner's expense, no need to say it—and a few condolences to pay to the loser. You cannot fail to choose the last solution. Bring the bow and the glasses!"

They brought a box in which the dice moved slightly and two large large tin trays with a score of glasses. Aristote went on talking:

"Gentlemen," said he to the rivals, "you are at a crossroad in your lives. Wrap yourselves in meditation before questioning Fate and swear that you will submit to her verdict whatever it is. We understand that the loser agrees to leave the country for a few months to forget Memen and not disturb the peace of the newly married couple. Remember, the higher mark makes the winner. Take an oath, gentlemen!"

Jasmin Larose and Jan-Jan held their hands on the

tray. However, the latter added: "It is neither tomorrow nor the day after that I will leave if I lose; it will be right now, without delaying one minute, I will go straight before me, by the sea!" Nobody stopped to think over those words that could mean only one thing: if the loser, Jan-Jan would go abroad, probably to a neighboring island.

"Let go, gentlemen, God be with you!" concluded Adam. He took the box and handed it to Jan-Jan, who shook feverishly the dice and threw them with force on the table. "Forty-seven," counted the Conciliator. "A good mark, indeed!" He picked up the dice, put them again into the box and handed it to Jasmin. The latter shook them slowly, carefully, and before throwing them stopped to cross himself. Some people objected to it. Aristote bade them remain silent. To cross one's self was never considered a witchcraft in any civilized country. The player let the dice slide gently.

"Fifty-seven," cried Aristote; "Jasmin Larose won Philomene Manmy! Gentlemen, fill your glasses; let us drink to the winner!"

Followed a tremendous uproar: Jan-Jan hustling everybody, upsetting the table and trampling upon Aristote, ran to his horse, sulkily loosened the halter and without putting on the stirrups, jumped on the saddle. Waving his fan-palm hat, he cried to the crowd and to Memen roused up from her torpid state and bending over the window: "Adieu, friends, forever

adieu! I am going to the country from which you cannot come back! Adieu, Memen, I cannot live without you; I am dying for your sake."

Clapping the spurs to the horse's side, he went galloping to the wharf. They hastened after him. Memen, falling backward, uttered hoarse cries . . . and while in a terrible fit she beat the ground with her legs and arms, her bounding breast burst one after the other every hook in her bodice. But nobody would pay the least attention to her. Jan-Jan's race was their aim.

Arrived at the seaside, the horse hesitated one minute. The rider exciting it with the voice, the heel and the flat of the machette, forced it to enter the water—these animals from the youngest age are used to take such baths ridden bareback by naked urchins. Before this act of despair, they discussed on the shore, uttering a thousand contrary suggestions. Many made their horses run into the water to follow Jan-Jan and bring him back, but they returned when the soil gave way under the feet of the animals.

At last a reasonable thought occurred to Aristote. He ordered the willing men to take their boats and pull quickly. Easier to say than to do; the day before they had drawn the boats very far on the shore, just under the palms and the breadfruit trees to protect them from the sun in prevision of the holiday. During this time, on the glittering sea, shining with the thousand lights of noontide, far away, man and

horse stood out, the animal still swimming, the nostrils at sea level, fighting desperately. All of a sudden, in a supreme effort, a wonderful leap, the horse got rid of Jan-Jan. The latter, when thrown, took a header in the bubbling water and vanished forever. When they arrived on the spot, the fisher-boats scoured the waves in vain; nothing would point out the exact place where the boy had plunged.

Such was the end of Jan-Jan, who went, as he had said, by the sea-road. What a failure it was for Aristote Adam! His glory as a Conciliator polluted irrevocably! "And it is all unjust!" thought a few men, but who would bear to oppose the general opinion? Better ascend a waterfall. As for Memen, everybody believed her rightly punished, for she continued to fall, almost every day, into frightful fits, howling and roaring like a devil-possessed creature. When she allayed her passion, you found her on the shore, sitting on her heels and staring at the sea with large, vacant eyes. If questioned, she would invariably answer: "I am waiting for Jan-Jan."

And since that time, there has never, never been in the village of Arcahaie a single girl flirt enough to keep gifts from her lovers without coming to a decision. They say yes or no and when accepting the armlet, honestly return the collar, and vice versa.

QUEEN MAB

By PAUL MORAND

(French)

MARION ALDER BEAUMONT, or Mab, according to the initials on her valises, is the fairest woman in all Peking. The color of her hair surpasses in brilliancy even the raw silk of Fokien. She is the widow of an English merchant, rather a dangerous thing to admit, in these days of so many divorcées. The invitations to receptions which she receives are without number, but she enjoys an almost selfish happiness and feeling of contentment in solitude. At the same time she has the power of turning the head of any one who would even dream of evading her. The English attaché is madly in love with her; the custom house officer would smuggle in order to please her, and the Russian Minister would rather have her hand than the post in London.

One July day, at three o'clock in the afternoon, the rickshaw conveyed Marion Beaumont across Peking. Her dress, of light foulard silk, floated in the breeze. In the vicinity of the Legations, the coolie could hardly touch the pavement with his naked feet, owing to the burning heat of the asphalt pavement—that asphalt which still remembered being the daughter of the vol-

canoes. Marion then passed through the large heavy door of the fort, with its machine guns, and bearing the inscription *Lest we forget*, and the date 1900. There were to be seen great heaps of barbed wire and more forts with sloping ditches reaching as far as Hatamen where only tennis and polo balls are heard. Today there are no more wars. Men have become good.

Arriving at the Chinese city, Mrs. Beaumont stopped her rickshaw at the door of an antiquity shop. These curiosity merchants, or as they call themselves in Hatamen *curio* merchants, have their shops located one after another, just like brothels in a seaport. Here one finds, instead of as in France, one little old man, responsible for the sale of a beautiful palace filled with treasures, twelve or fifteen enormous individuals with naked bodies, selling a small Ming trinket made somewhere in Japan. But Mrs. Beaumont did not enter any shop. She dismissed her coolie, pretending for a moment to interest herself in the shop windows, then she started away on foot. The wind continued to blow, and her dress, being made of such transparent material, allowed the outline of her limbs to show, giving one the impression of an X-Ray picture.

Oscar Stein arrived in Peking in the spring of 1914. He was a Dane, a bachelor, idle, a lover of the arts, who had come to Hunan in search of undiscovered antiquities. Syracuse, with its noisy grotto of Deny, is not the one city of the world where gossip spreads

the most quickly, nor is Rome, the European city of tale-bearers, but Peking, the worldly city of scandal, mystery, broken promises and noxious influences.

Almost before you have had time to change your golf clothes, the wife of the financial counselor is aware of how many holes you have played. At the club, at the cocktail hour, the Minister to Spain tells you that, according to his idea, you paid too much for the screen that you purchased in the morning. At table, the director of the Yunan Bank reproaches you for tempting the stenographer with insidious drinks, and with intentions less transparent than gin. Everything is known, and the international post office is swamped with anonymous letters. What is not known is invented. The only thing which is ignored is the amount of one's debts and Chinese politics.

From the time of his arrival, a man as handsome as Oscar Stein could not fail to attract attention. One heard him spoken of at polo, at the swimming tank of the American Legation and also at the club bar, as being the most famous dancer of Peking, who had just arrived at the Hotel Wagon-Lit. He knew how to dance a new step called the tango, but he had also another vocation, that of archæologist. Oscar Stein created quite a furore when he presented his letters of introduction to the European colony, as no one had even seen before such a young and handsome scholar.

Peking has fear of every contagious sickness, but love.

Two months later, the Chinese summer appeared with its pelting rains and dark, strangely formed clouds. No one thought of connecting Oscar Stein's name with any kind of adventure, though all the beautiful women sought him. He assumed a bored attitude, and tactfully treated each salon which he visited as being of the most favoured nation. He amused himself greatly and drank freely without either falling in love or becoming drunk, in spite of the youth of the women or the age of the wine. This very enchanting person was always just on the point of leaving in order to make some excavations, and always expressed regret on being delayed owing to the slowness, on the part of the Chinese government, in giving him the necessary permits. One after another, the Europeans were leaving for their vacations. This applied to the women of the Legation as well, some going to their temples, new goddesses,—while others went to their villas in Peitaho, and those of less means enjoyed themselves at a modest hotel at the foot of the Grande Muraille. Only the yellow ones remained in Pekin. They slept with pipes in their mouths and their heads on a warm stove.

August 28, 1914. The war has been going on for a month. Pekin, the frivolous Pekin itself, has already commenced to count its dead. In the chancellery, the typewriters are buzzing; but the banks are idle. The tennis courts serve as exercising fields for the troops. As far as the military attachés are con-

cerned, they are overwhelmed with invitations, but all the salons are closed. It is for this reason that the love affair of Oscar Stein and Mrs. Beaumont has remained a secret.

After dismissing her own beautiful white rickshaw, Mrs. Beaumont engaged another one for a trip. Unlike her own, this one was very dirty and the coolie wore a long braid and had a naked body which was warm and red. Mrs. Beaumont was badly shaken up, first by being brushed against the men who acted as porters, and who balanced, at either end of a bamboo stick, the filthy wares with which they were obstructing traffic, and then again by being bumped into the squeaking wheelbarrow of the water carriers who sprinkle the streets. This merry widow was passing now through the Tartar city, the sordid city in ruins and infested with tom cats. It was during the rainy season, which made it necessary for her to ford the cess-pools. Queen Mab very often soiled the white silk robe of a Chinese dude, who happened to be out for an airing with his favorite bird, which he carried in a gilded cage; and farther on she interrupted sales which were being carried on in the rear of a small shop, where the shouts of "shocking, shocking" were heard, and which ended up with curses. The dogs, the filthy Pekinese, are the only ones that are never disturbed. They are old and bad tempered, either of a reddish black or dirty beige color, and they sleep in the mud, too tired out even to wag their tails when the auto-

mobiles toot their horns. Finally, at the end of the street, appeared the inclosure wall of Peking, baked by the hot sun of centuries.

No Chinamen ever paid much attention to Mrs. Beaumont or questioned what this European was doing in this out-of-the-way neighborhood at the hour when others were having their afternoon nap. She stopped for a moment next to an old moldy green wall, just in front of a beautiful red lacquer door, locked transversely by a copper bolt. The door opened into a winding passageway, mysteriously planned to bewilder the evil spirits who were attacking visitors. In an interior court, with large bays, Stein appeared, clad in black silk Chinese pantaloons, tied at the waist but not belted. No coolie was in sight. The entire quarter was asleep under the rays of the scorching sun, the midnight sun of the far East. Only the metallic sounds of the grasshoppers were to be heard.

“—My love!”

Just as Queen Mab alighted from her rickshaw like a dragon fly, Stein carried her away in his arms. She was filled with passion, and weakened and nervous as the result of the climate of northern China which causes women to curl up like cats fighting zibelines. She permitted herself to be taken across a second court, more shaded and more secret than the first. The heavens could not be seen owing to the heavy woven rushes which permitted only the faintest rays of light to penetrate. On the floor there was a tiger

skin from Mongolia, and mattresses of black oilcloth unrolled like manuscripts, and pillows hard as rocks which made the neck stiff.

For the first time in her life, Mrs. Beaumont was in love. She was an English woman, like so many others, whose knowledge of their beauty isolated them from every one else as much as though they were living on an island. She had been educated to consider men as a necessary evil and after living in the far East had grown accustomed to the idea that women were at a premium. She never thought very seriously about love until the gods revenged themselves by sending Oscar Stein. She was very conscious of her own beauty and considered marriage as a monstrous custom invented by man, and the remainder of life as a surprise, a kind of improvised picnic. She had fallen in love when she was least thinking about it. "You know, dear Mab, that I will never be able to live without you. But I must leave you for a short while. It is very necessary. Just for a few weeks. So many have left their dear ones this month, and for other reasons than mine. As far as I am concerned, I am a dirty neutral. I have never fought, not even to possess you, Mab."

And Stein clasped his hands around Mrs. Beaumont's neck.

"Don't go away. We have known one another only a month, it is just a month ago that I came here. It was the day following the declaration of war. You

remember, do you not? I thought that you were living at the Hotel Wagon-Lit. I was so surprised to find that you did not stop at Morrison Street, but continued past the gates of Tambour, stopping at a small house situated in a grove of trees. There were lovely red lotus blooms there, queer-eyed fishes and a charming tiled court with a roof heaped with grasses. From now on you are my life, Mab!"

This declaration is merely an expression of the far East to his lady love, the idol of his dreams. He chose her in spite of her country, and this war, which had separated every one else, had united them.

Stein embraced Mrs. Beaumont once again and seated her at a table before a cup of tea and plates filled with lotus seeds which were fresh and ripe. He started playing the phonograph—and a cool gust of wind announced the approach of evening. The small hills in the distance appeared like blue mounds above the floods and Pekin seemed like an inhabited forest.

And Stein confessed that it was this very evening that he had to be on his way.

"Mab, don't discourage me! I must go to Hunan! I have received my permission and have reserved space on the train. I have given orders to the coolies and the caravan is waiting for me."

"Don't leave me yet! Do not abandon me now! Think of the lakes of Mazurie and its hundreds of thousands of dead, separated forever from their loves!"

Mrs. Beaumont shivered. A large Chinese crow

flew by with melancholy shrieking; it seemed almost like a presentiment for him not to go. It kept on encircling them with its flat wings, which were ruffled at the end like an old feather duster. It was one of those crows of Asia,—of Asia, mother of all the blackguards of the world,—which fly from Peking as far as Moscow.

“Shall we get married upon your return?” Mrs. Beaumont demanded, thinking that the knowledge of this might bring her solace.

“To marry you, that will be my greatest joy. Tonight, I shall leave for Shanghai, in order to get my scientific instruments and pass them through the custom house—then two weeks on horseback—and, in a month’s time, at the most, I shall be back here again.”

“Please don’t go!” Mab reiterated. “Just stay a while longer—”

She stared at Stein with mistrusting eyes, which grew hard when she at last realized that he was determined to go.

“You are not going— You are not going to enlist?”

Oscar Stein only smiled, and replied in French, “I am a dirty neutral.”

“Swear to me that you won’t enlist!”

“I swear.”

Mrs. Beaumont returned from a horseback ride to the Temple du Ciel. Above the Muraille, a hot sun cast its rays among a splash of purplish clouds. He

had been gone for a month already without having sent her any word. Everywhere she was encountering the camels, laden with munition for Russia. They had a stupid, yet pretentious air about them and were still wearing their winter coats, with large tufts of hair on their legs, which looked like a moth-eaten carpet. No news had come from Stein, but the day following his departure for Shanghai, some American friends had met him on the railroad going north, in the direction of Kalgan— Why had he lied? That night, there was a dinner at the Russian Legation. There were twenty-eight places laid at table. The coolies, all dressed in white cassocks, appeared silent and absent minded, but were paid, nevertheless to listen and to understand everything as they passed the bowls of gold and black lacquer.

Being among Allies, the guests spoke as ill as possible of their enemy neighbors. They thought of the absent ones in the nearby ravaged zones.

“By the way, who has had news of Stein?”

Nobody. He had passed out of existence like the tango.

“Will this clever dancer return to us, after he has mastered a new step? The goose step?”

“More or less of an adventurer,” the financial attaché from Belgium replied.

“Why must you always paint everything black?” Mrs. Beaumont remarked, slightly irritated.

“My dear Madame, this Dane who claims to be on

a scientific mission, and in whom you apparently have become so interested, this Dane, who is entirely unknown to the Legation, has no merit whatsoever, according to my way of thinking."

"The ways of thinking of a diplomat might be frightful."

Everybody began taking part in the conversation—but the Russian Minister was the only one who was smiling.

After dinner, the ladies went into the salon, and the men formed another group in the study of their host. They all smoked and the Europeans held their fans in their hands.

Quite naturally, one of the topics of conversation was "curios." One was a specialist in rugs, another in certain rare species of iris, and a third maintained an interest in monochromes.

"Because we are alone, I will show you a very rare piece," said the host to his guests. He took out a bunch of keys from his pocket and unlocked his safe, and took out a package wrapped carefully in a Chinese fabric. Slowly, he untied the silk knot, with his red gouty fingers—right on top there were some papers.

"Here is the pedigree; it is a costly trinket," nodded the Belgian, who was anxious to make known his knowledge of the native customs, because the Chinese always have identification papers for a rare piece, also a list of the names of all who have had it as a possession.

"This object has belonged only to one person," the Russian Minister remarked, "and if I don't open the package any further, it is because I wish to allow your dinner to digest. This object," he continued, "used to belong to Stein of whom we were speaking, just a few minutes ago— It is his head."

Beneath the yellowish paper, one could see a tarry mass, which seemed to be mumified by the heat from the desert.

"Stein was a German staff officer," continued the Russian. "We learned that through an intercepted telegram. He had received orders to proceed in the direction of the tunnels, near Lake Baikal, in order to wreck the Trans-Siberian train. Certain faithful tribes were notified by us of his mission. That is why, in recognition of this service, by the czar, the head of this handsome dancer has just been sent by special messenger.

"Can we look through the rest of the papers, my dear friend?" demanded the English secret service officer, Major General Sir Erik Bull?"

"Impossible," replied the Russian with a smile. "You would find nothing but the picture of one of the ladies who are dining here tonight, one of the rare virtuous ones of Pekin."

TWO CHURCHES

By MILAN OGRIZOVIC AND LOUIS ADAMIC

(Croatian)

THERE are two religions in the village of Bakié—the people living along the hill belong to the Greek-Orthodox Church and those dwelling in the valley are Roman Catholics. Where there is more than one religion, there are usually as many churches. The houses of worship in Bakié are not such great and beautiful structures as one sees in the cities; they were built just to answer the purpose—for the good people to pray in and, when their minds and souls are not actually concentrated on prayer, to stare at something.

The Catholic church in the valley is of stone, a little chapel, while the Greek-Orthodox temple on the hill is of wood, but larger than the other. The church on the hill has two bells, both alike in size and tone, and the one in the valley has three, two alike and the third one somewhat smaller; and whenever some prominent villager passes on to the next world the bells of both churches ring in unison a sonorous farewell to the soul.

In a word, the two churches never cause any ill feeling among the people of the village of Bakié. One

never hears any arguments concerning religion and church rules. When holidays come, especially at Christmas time, people visit each other and exchange greetings of the season. On occasions of different church or parish gatherings and feasts, young people from both the hill and the valley homes play *kolo* before the church, either one or the other, and, unless personally acquainted with both, one cannot tell whether the young man is a Catholic or the maiden a Greek-Orthodox.

It often happens that the sight of some girl of one faith pleases the eyes of some young man of the other faith; and the result is love and marriage. Now church rules pertaining to marriages which involve two religions are complicated, to say the least; and to remove any possibility of hard feeling or misunderstanding on account of a slight difference in religions, as well as to eliminate correspondence with the Bishops and the civil authorities, the young people as a rule take the matter into their own hands and follow a very simple course. That is, one of the two enters the church of the other, and—presto!—one faith, one love. You can now imagine how much work this means for the two spiritual leaders of the community.

At the time of our story the shepherd of the Greek-Orthodox flock was Pope¹ Joco Gjermanović; and Father Marko Ivanusić, a grand old man, was the beloved head of the Catholic parish in the valley. Luck

¹ Greek-Orthodox priest.

had it that Pope Joco and Father Marko were very warm friends. Like their parishioners, they visited each other and respected each other's convictions. Often the villagers saw Father Marko and Pope Joco sitting under the latter's linden tree, cups of wine before them, chatting and laughing in perfect friendship. Then again they saw Pope Joco pay a visit to the priest in the valley.

The two were not brought to an exchange of bitter words even when it came to marriage problems. "We shall leave it to the Bishops," they would say, and thus everything ran smoothly. Not that either of them was indifferent to the strength of his parish—they both firmly defended the principles of their respective religions. But when it appeared to them that it was to the best interest of peace, either Pope Joco or Father Marko gave in.

Pope Joco Gjermanović had a daughter. Desanka was her name, but her father and mother called her "Desha." She was beautiful—in every way an ideal of girlhood. The pope and his wife loved her above everybody and everything else on earth, as she was their only child. Although she was not a common peasant girl, she nevertheless worked about the house, and even milked cows. She had been brought up according to her father's ideas. "Desha will not necessarily marry some high official from the city—perhaps only some teacher or young pope—probably some

young man from the village," Joco often said to his wife.

Desanka reached her eighteenth year, an age when a girl becomes the subject of much gossiping, guessing, and speculating. Two, three months elapsed without bringing about any developments in her case, to the disappointment of many; and then one day Desanka met Mirko Novković, clerk in the village mayor's office. He was not a common mayor's clerk; he had already passed examinations for the county cashier's position and, as they say, was in line for promotion.

"He is very manly and handsome!" Desanka told herself. And daily Mirko would pass by her father's house and raise his hat to her. Presently he stopped, and they exchanged a few remarks, smiles, and laughs. The affair came to the attention of the village, and also to the ears of her mother and father; but old Pope Joco did not give it much thought, saying that it was a matter for women to gray their heads with.

A month later, when the pope happened to be away from home, her mother contrived the following conversation with Desanka about the mayor's clerk:—

"Why is that man always passing by our house?"

"What man?"

"That Novković, or whatever his name is."

"Why shouldn't he, mother? Isn't the street open to all?"

"But he always looks toward the house."

"Who can forbid him to look at any house? Why, mother——"

"And it seems to me you are speaking to him."

"Why shouldn't I speak to him? Isn't he a good Christian?"

A few moments' silence. Then: "Tell me, dear. Do not have any secrets from your mother."

And Desanka laughed aloud. "What shall I tell you? I talk to Novković as I do to anybody else."

"It appears to me you like him," said the mother, finally.

"Perhaps I do—perhaps I love him!"—boldly.

As the conversation progressed, Desanka confided to her mother that Mirko Novković had already asked her to marry him as soon as he became county cashier.

"But he is not of our faith!" exclaimed her mother.

"I know he isn't of our faith!" returned Desha.

"Then, my darling daughter," sighed the old lady, "it will be difficult. You know that father will never consent to your marriage to a Catholic. It has never yet happened that a pope's daughter married a man of another religion."

"Mother, suppose you speak to father about it—not directly, remember; just suggest it to him."

That evening after supper Desanka stepped out of the room, leaving old Pope Joco and his wife alone. The pope lighted his long pipe and sat gazing out of the window into the valley, where it was already grow-

ing dark. His wife, at the other end of the table, was nervously fingering a few crumbs of bread. And outside the door stood Desanka, waiting, impatient. At last Joco's wife coughed a little and then began: "Joco, I want to speak to you about something."

"Well"—from Joco.

"Our Desha is growing," said his wife, "and—well, she is no longer a child, as you can see for yourself. We should give a thought to her future—her marriage. I've wanted to speak to you about it before. She has already chosen her man. I suppose you've heard about it?"

"Yes, I think I have," replied Joco, apparently bored, "but I've never concerned myself about it. Such things are for women to discuss and settle."

"It's that Novković," continued Joco's wife, persistently. "He is not a bad sort. He has already asked her, and Desha loves him. Novković would come to ask you for her hand, but he doesn't quite dare yet."

"Novković, Novković!" The old pope at last became interested. "Hm, hm! Now I remember. He is not a bad sort, indeed, but—eh—isn't he a Catholic?"

"Yes," admitted the old lady, "he is a Catholic."

"Eh—then it is out of question," said the pope emphatically. "My child cannot—"

"But there are laws for that," interrupted his wife. "They can both remain what they are and—"

"Eh? Yes—" The pope was indignant. "Perhaps it would be all the same to a woman, but not to me! What would their children be?" And he reached for his hat and left the house.

Desanka and her mother cried late into the evening.

"Why don't you try to get your *momek* into our religion?" suggested the mother.

"Oh, he could never do that," answered Desanka. "Father Marko got him his present position, recommended him for county cashier, and helped him in many other ways. If Mirko were now to drop his religion, that would mean that he was ungrateful to Father Marko."

"Then, my dear child," sighed her mother, "you would best forget him. That is all I can say to you."

"Forget him! Forget him!" repeated Desha to herself. Then she said aloud to her mother:

"This is my decision! You and I are going to Father Marko this very afternoon and arrange for my entrance into his Church."

"Child, you are mad!" exclaimed her mother. "Is Novkovié the only man in the world? There are others; he isn't everything!"

But Desanka and her mother, notwithstanding the latter's protests and pleas, went to Father Marko and carefully explained to him the entire situation. Father Marko was at first greatly surprised, and then, keeping in mind his friendship to Joco and the advantages of peace in the village, he informed the women that he

was sorry, but he could not take the responsibility. As they persisted, the priest suggested that they should go to the parish head in Dreznica and that there Desanka should enter the Church, repeating that he regretted that it was, so to speak, impossible for him to accommodate her, in view of his close friendship with Pope Joco Gjermanović.

That was satisfactory to the girl and her mother, and one Sunday morning, shortly after, they went to Dreznica to enter Mirko's religion. Their going to the neighbouring parish was a secret. Desanka planned to get through the procedure required; then, as a Catholic, to visit Mirko and tell him the glad news; and in the evening to return home, together with Mirko, and inform her father.

But Desanka was greatly disappointed, after coming from the church, to hear that Mirko was not in Dreznica, but had left the town early in the morning. Her mother thought that Mirko had possibly gone to the village of Bakić. He had perhaps taken the road through the woods, while she and Desanka journeyed to Dreznica by another route, thus failing to meet him.

So, instead of spending the better part of the day in Dreznica as they had planned, Pope Joco's wife and daughter returned to their village that same morning. The bells of both churches were ringing, glorifying the Lord's day; for Lord's day it was for all—for those whose house of worship was on the hill, as well

as for those who went to Father Marko's little church in the valley.

It was just after services when Desanka and her mother reached their home on the hill. And whom do you think they saw standing under the linden tree but Pope Joco and—Mirko Novković! Old Joco was clasping Mirko's hand and speaking to him in a fatherly manner.

"Eh, you women!" he exclaimed, as he turned about and saw his family approaching from the road. "We have a guest for the day. And some day he shall be my son-in-law!"

Without doubt the old pope was in a very happy frame of mind, but his wife and daughter could not understand.

"Well, why are you standing there like two statues?" continued old Joco.

"Go, Desha, and bring us some brandy and cheese."

In a few minutes, Pope Joco and his family and their guest, Mirko Novković, were sitting under the linden tree, cheese and brandy on the table before them.

"Well," said Pope Joco, turning to his guest, "tell the women how things now stand. You must have noticed that their faces are swelling from sheer curiosity. They are not sure whether they are awake or dreaming. Ha, ha!"

And then Novković explained that, in order to remove the obstacle in the way of Desanka's and his

happiness, he had come to Pope Joco and asked him to be admitted into the Greek-Orthodox Church. He had not told Desanka about his intention, having planned to give her a pleasant surprise. He knew that Father Marko, the priest in the valley, would not approve of his step, but—oh, well—Desanka's happiness and his own was all that really mattered.

The old lady and her daughter were speechless.

"That is the truth," added Pope Joco. "He came to me this morning and told me about this and that, and I performed the ceremony and entered his name in the book. Now he is one of my flock and I no longer object to your marriage, Desanka, my daughter; but, like a good father, I urge you to become Mirko Novković's wife."

But Desanka and her mother seemed to be living corpses.

"Eh, women!" yelled Pope Joco.

"Have you forgotten you have tongues? It would be proper for you to say something—something that would make me even happier than I am."

"Is it possible that I haven't done right?" asked Mirko.

"Oh, yes," the old lady managed to say; "but had we known that yesterday—"

"Don't tell them, please, mother," begged Desanka in a whisper.

"Has Desha changed her mind about marrying me?" asked Mirko, in alarm.

"What is it? What is it?" demanded Pope Joco. "Tell me what has happened. You speak, Desha."

"We went to Dreznica," confessed his daughter, "and I entered the Catholic Church, so that I could marry Mirko."

Pope Joco jumped to his feet, angered beyond expression.

"Quiet yourself, Joco," begged his wife, and he tried to comply with her wish.

He thought for a moment, and then he said: "Matters are worse than ever now. I can't tell who is who. But in the end it doesn't matter. Father Marko and I will write to our respective Bishops—I for you, Marko Novković, who are now one of my flock, and Father Marko for you, Desanka, my daughter—and we shall let the Bishops settle the case. That is all. God bless you!"

To this day no one in the village of Bakić knows how the Bishops settled the case; but those who were invited to the wedding of Mirko and Desanka meet one another of a Sunday morning on their way to church—some go to the wooden church on the hilltop, others to Father Marko's little stone chapel in the valley.

THE STARLING AND THE ANGEL ONE-HUNDRED- AND-ONE

By LUIGI PIRANDELLO

(Italian)

WE had risen while it was still dark and had been walking for three hours as hungry as wolves, taking certain villainous short cuts which, according to Stefano Traina, ought to have saved us a third of the distance; but we had already been obliged to turn back two or three times, being unable to find any way out, and I do not know how much time we had lost climbing over old walls, wading across pebbly brooks and making our way through thick hedges of cacti and brambles. These hard labours had robbed us of the only real compensation for our lost sleep—that of enjoying the exhilarating freshness of the morning air in the country, while we walked along level roads. Who of us, in such circumstances, could have had the spirit to contradict Stefano Traina and defend the starlings, which he depicted as being a real calamity to the country, much worse even than that true scourge of God, the locust-fly?

But Stefano Traina was like that—when speaking

he felt the need of believing that some one was contradicting him, and, growing all the time more heated, he wanted to make us three poor innocents believe the starlings came in such thick clouds that in passing over the sun they obscured it, and that, if they should descend on a wood of olive trees, in the twinkling of an eye they would exterminate it; because it appeared that each starling carried away with him no less than three olives, one in each claw and another in his beak, and that he would swallow them whole, digesting them as though they were a mere nothing.

"Stone and all?" asked Bartolino Gaglio, astounded.

"Stone and all."

"On my soul! What a digestion!" exclaimed Sebastiano Terilli.

"The starlings? Why I tell you . . ." went on Stefano Traina. In conclusion, he showed that if on the one hand we ought to thank Celestino Calandra, the youngest and handsomest of the canons of Montelusa, for having invited us to spend a week on his lands at Cumbo, on the other hand Celestino Calandra ought to be very grateful to us for the signal service we were going to render him in saving his crop of olives by shooting the starlings. It is true that neither I nor Sebastiano Terilli nor Bartolino Gaglio had ever done any shooting, as could be seen by the bright newness of our guns, bought only the day before; but this did not really matter. According to Stefano Traina, one could shoot starlings even with one's eyes shut.

Well, it may have been because we shot with only one eye shut and the other open, but the fact is that, after four days of the most relentless chase in the olive woods of Cumbo, not a starling worth calling one did we succeed in bringing down, not even by accident; but olives, oh yes, they fell like hail at every shot, to such an extent that the good Celestino Calandra (who was young and saintly) began to remark, between gentle laughs, that it could not be other than God himself who sent him such a consolation.

Extermination there was, but that was in the poultry-yards of Cumbo. A pantragruelian hunger rose in all four of us young hunters; but perhaps it was only rage that possessed us, and this on account of all the starlings we had failed to hit and which flew away so quietly, without the slightest haste, as if they would have said: "Ugh, how annoying you are with your shots!"

Celestino Calandra's old housekeeper, Donna Gesa (who was old and saintly) holding, one in each hand, two bunches of chickens with necks drawn and heads dangling, looked daggers at us each morning when we returned from our shooting, and more especially at Sebastiano Terilli, who, not content with the destruction of olive trees and of chickens, irritated *Monsignore* at table with his arguments on matters which were neither here nor there. The good odour of the country house, buried in the midst of olive and almond trees, those patriarchal rooms, bare, ample and

resounding, with their uneven floors that smelt of stored grain, of the sweat of those who labour in the sun and of the smoke from the burning of straw and wood in the rude fireplaces; all these things did not succeed in softening Sebastiano Terilli's acrid spirit, dilettante philosopher and convinced materialist that he was. It is true he apostrophised the soul in almost every one of his frequent exclamations: "By the soul of this, by the soul of that"; but he did not really mean the "soul," it was merely a mode of expression.

The most heated discussions were those which took place in the evening, after supper; and they very much disturbed Donna Gesa, the old housekeeper, whose habit it was before going to bed to bundle herself up warmly and retire to a corner of the dining-room in order to tell her rosary of fifteen "decades." They very much disturbed her, because she felt continually tempted to interrupt and to contradict, as could plainly be seen by her gestures, the grimaces that she made, and the rapid rubbing of a finger every now and then under her disdainful nose.

She was a little woman, thin and active, always slightly irritable. Between her long thin lips there was generally to be seen a light froth of saliva. Her eyelids blinked continually over her sharp little dark eyes, like a ferret's; and on her cheeks, between her temples and her nose and just below the skin, there stretched an intricate network of tiny violet-coloured veins.

Finally, one morning after breakfast, she could stand it no longer. We were talking about women, the choice of wives, and mothers and daughters-in-law. Stefano Traina, who had in his house a terror of a mother-in-law, burst into an angry tirade against the whole tribe.

"But very often," Donna Gesa suddenly rejoined with upraised hands and quivering nostrils, "very often it is the daughters-in-law who are vipers! Vipers, yes, vipers! And yet it is always the mothers-in-law who are blamed!"

Stefano Traina gazed at her for a moment as though petrified; then, jumping to his feet, he ran to his room, seized his gun and rushed out of the house.

We all broke into loud laughter. But Donna Gesa only frowned, and waited until we had finished; then turning to *Monsignore* and gently shaking her head in sign of commiseration, she asked:

"Wasn't that old Donna Poponè a good creature? Your Reverence knows she was: the one in the miracle of the Angel One-hundred-and-one."

"Tell us about it! Tell us about it!" we cried, Bartolino Gaglio and I; but Sebastiano Terilli, interposing with noisy incredulity, demanded: "One moment! Wait a moment! What is that you said? One-hundred-and-one? Is there then a hundredth and a hundred-and-first angel?"

"Of course there is!" exclaimed Bartolino Gaglio immediately, fearing the interruption might make the old woman indignant and unwilling to tell the story.

"The hundred-and-first, the hundred-and-second, the hundred-and-third . . . What is there to marvel at in that? There are the angels, and God assigns to each one his own number."

Celestino Calandra (who was young and saintly) smiled good-humouredly and explained to us that in this case the number one-hundred-and-one was not, strictly speaking, a progressive number, but that it referred to a particular angel to whom the people of the neighbourhood were especially devoted, as to one who had under his charge a hundred of the souls in Purgatory, leading them every night to holy enterprises.

"A centurion angel then?" suggested Terilli.

"Well, now, what about old Donna Poponè?" I asked, annoyed, and turning to Donna Gesa. Whereupon she sat down, and began to relate.

"Her real name was Maragrazia Aiello. Poponè was only a nickname, but all the Aiellos, from father to son, have been so called—who can tell why?

"Long-suffering as an angel, she always went about with downcast eyes, poor thing, and with sealed lips. What had been hers did not belong to her. She had deprived herself of everything for the sake of her son, and now remained where she was put without giving annoyance to any one, not even to the air.

"But her daughter-in-law, who was called Maricchia, offered her provocation upon provocation from

morning till evening. Oh, the brazen face of her which never blushed at anything, her wagging tongue and forward character!

"There is nothing worse than a forward woman. She would not wear the *mantellina* like all the other women of the village, because she said her father was a master-workman; she wore, instead, the wool *manto*, cut into points and fringed. She also wished to be called '*gnora* and not *comare*.¹

"Donna Poponè kept silent and suffered all these things for love of her son, who was also rather easy-going—rather tame indeed. If he had been my son! However. What did she not endure, that poor creature of God, Donna Poponè!

"At sixty years of age you ought to have seen her—without a single white hair. She was like a little waxen madonna; spotlessly clean and neat, with thick hair and fresher in complexion than a girl of fifteen. Like all poor women, she dressed in *barracan*;² but on her any ugly old thing seemed to be of silk, so fine a deportment had she, with something in her manner so well-bred that every one she met immediately made way for her. I remember her hands, how fine they were; as delicate as the film of an onion. And how they had worked, those hands!

"It was not as if her daughter-in-law was at all out of pocket on her account; because, while still

¹ '*gnora*, a common abbreviation of *signora*. *Comare* means "comrade" and corresponds to the Scottish "cummer."

² A coarse cloth made of goat's hair.

living, she had given up to her son all that she possessed, which was a little cottage and a small plot of land under the Fornaci. She still kept herself, however, by doing *novenæ* and telling rosaries for the devout who came from miles and miles to see her and who rewarded her for the blessings which she succeeded in obtaining for them from the holy souls in Purgatory, with whom during the night she was always in communion.

"Every day there were fresh proofs of this. I know this: that once a poor mother came to consult her about a son of hers who was in America and had not written for three months. 'Come again to-morrow,' said Donna Poponè. The next day she announced that the son had not written because he was on his way home, that he had already arrived at Genoa, and that in a very few days he would be with her again. And so it was. I tell you my flesh still creeps when I think of it.

"A saint! A saint! She was really a saint, that Donna Poponè!"

"But what about this miracle of the Angel One-hundred-and-one?" asked Sebastiano Terilli.

"We are coming to that now," replied Donna Gesa.

"One day, in order to enjoy a short respite from the daily provocations of her daughter-in-law, Donna Poponè thought of going for a few weeks to the neighbouring village of Favara, where she had a sister, a widow like herself.

"She asked leave of her son, and, having obtained it, went to a friend in the village who was called *Fi*'³ Lisi, to ask him to lend her a little she-ass that he possessed, which was old and rather mangy, but as quiet as a tortoise. Donna Poponè knew very well that *Fi*' Lisi would not refuse his ass to her, although he had no peace all day, such was his affection for the little animal, if in the morning she did not drink the whole of her usual bucketful of water. He was a strange old man, this *Fi*' Lisi, and in the neighbourhood he was everywhere ridiculed on account of that little ass of his. Every morning he held up with both hands the bucket of water to the ass's nose, inviting her to drink by whistling, and sometimes this went on for an hour or two; but woe to any of his neighbours if, annoyed by his continual, doleful whistling, they cried out to him to stop! A widower, just as Donna Poponè was a widow, he had for many years been trying to induce her to marry him. 'Be quiet, good man!' Donna Poponè had always responded in a low voice, at the same time making the sign of the cross, as it seemed to her nothing less than a temptation of the Devil.

"That day she waited in front of the small cobbled court where *Fi*' Lisi lived and had his stable—waiting a long time for the old man to finish his whistling, amidst the impatient remarks of all the neighbours, who urged her to enter, crying: 'Go in, go in;

³ An abbreviation of *Fio* (uncle). It corresponds to "gaffer."

if you go in he will stop it!’ At last the old man left off, and then she entered the court.

“The little ass? Certainly! He would lend it to her even for a month, even for a year; he would give it to her, and everything else besides, all that he possessed, if . . .

“‘What! Again, you foolish old thing? Be quiet! I want it only for a week; I am going to see my sister at Favara.’

“As soon as Fi’ Lisi heard her utter the name, ‘Favara,’ he became very excited and began to say that never, never would he consent to her going alone to that murderous place, where to kill a man was the same as to kill a fly. And he told her how once a Favarese, to see if his gun was in good condition, went to the street door and discharged it at the first person he saw passing; also, that a carter of Favara, after having allowed a little boy of twelve, whom he had met at midnight on the highroad, to mount up into his cart, had killed him in his sleep because he had heard the jingling of three *soldi* in his pocket; he had slaughtered him like a sheep, poor little one, put the three *soldi* into his own pocket to buy tobacco with, thrown the little corpse behind the hedge, and then, Gee up! He had gone on, taking his time and singing as he went, beneath the stars of Heaven and under the eyes of God which were watching him. But the little soul of the poor murdered boy had cried out for vengeance, and God so disposed the mind of the carter that he him-

self, on arriving soon after daybreak at Favara, instead of going to his master's cart-yard, stopped in front of the Guard House and, with the three *soldi* still in his blood-stained hand, had denounced himself as though Another were speaking through his mouth.

" 'You see what God can do!' said Donna Poponè. 'Therefore I need have no fear.' Fi' Lisi tried to insist on accompanying her, but she remained firm and said that in that case she would hire somebody else's ass; so that at last he gave in and promised her that next day at dawn the little ass would be standing in front of her door, pack-saddle and all. Now it happened, during the night, that Fi' Lisi, having on his mind the ass, which was to be ready by dawn, woke up. It was bright moonlight, and to him it seemed to be day. So he jumped from his bed, saddled the little ass while you could say 'Amen,' and, leading her to Donna Poponè's, knocked at the door and said: 'The little ass is here, *gna* ⁴ Poponè. I have tied her to the ring. May the Saviour and His blessed Mother accompany you!'

"Very softly, so as not to waken her daughter-in-law, her son and her little grandchildren, Donna Poponè began to dress herself. But, accustomed as she was to rise at the break of dawn, she could not convince herself in the silence which reigned everywhere around her that it was really time to set out on her

⁴ Another abbreviation very widely used in Central Italy: *Gna*—*Compagna*, another form of *Comare*.

journey. 'Yet it must be!' she said to herself. 'My sleep has deceived me.'

"So she went out with her bundle under her *mantellina*. But, on looking at the sky, she noticed immediately that it was not the brightness of dawn which she saw, but only the light of the moon. The whole countryside was sleeping peacefully; even the little ass slept, on her feet, tied there to the ring near the door.

" 'Oh, Jesu,' exclaimed Donna Poponè, 'how stupid that Fi' Lisi is! Must I now start on my journey by night? Well, well, I am old, there is the moon and I have nothing to lose. Besides, the holy souls from Purgatory will accompany me.'

"She mounted the ass, and making the sign of the cross set out on her journey. When she was already a good way from the village and surrounded by the open country, moving slowly on the little ass in the moonlight, she began to think of the boy who had been murdered and thrown behind the dusty hedge, poor little creature of God, and of the many other crimes and wicked vendettas that were told about Favara, meanwhile riding on with her *mantellina* over her head and pulled down to her eyes to prevent herself from seeing the frightening shadows in the country on either side of the road, where the dust lay so thick that not even the hoofs of the little ass could be heard.

"Her journey in that great silence, on that long,

white road under the moonlight; it all seemed to her like a dream.

“ ‘Oh, ye holy souls in Purgatory,’ she kept saying to herself, ‘I commend myself to you.’ And not for a moment did she cease to pray.

“But either on account of the slowness of her progress or because of her weakness or for whatever reason, at last she was overcome by sleep. Donna Poponè could not quite say how it was, but the fact is that, waking up at a certain point, she found herself between two long files of soldiers, one on either side of the road; and at their head, in the middle of the road, was their captain riding on his horse.

“At this sight Donna Poponè felt quite comforted, and she thanked God that just on the very night of her journey He had so provided that those soldiers should also be going to Favara. What rather astonished her, however, was that so many young men of about twenty years of age said not a word on seeing in their midst an old woman like herself on an ass that seemed even older than she was and which certainly could not have cut a very fine figure on the high road at such an hour. But why were they so silent, all these soldiers? Even their tread could not be heard, nor did they raise the slightest dust. Donna Poponè now looked at them quite awestruck, not knowing indeed what to think. They seemed like shadows in the moonlight, and yet they were real, yes, real soldiers,

and there was their captain on his horse. But why were they so silent?

"She understood why, when, at daybreak, she came in sight of the village. At a certain point the captain stopped his horse and waited for Donna Poponè to come up to him. 'Maragrazia Aiello,' he then said to her, 'I am the Angel One-hundred-and-one to whom you are so devoted, and these who have escorted you thus far are souls from Purgatory. As soon as you arrive, make your peace with God, because before midday you will die.' Thus he spoke, and vanished, together with the holy escort.

"When the sister at Favara saw Donna Poponè arrive at her house as pale as wax and with fixed, staring eyes, she cried:

" 'What is the matter, Maragra?'

" 'Call me a confessor,' answered the other with a ghost of a voice.

" 'Do you feel ill?'

" 'I must make my peace with God. Before midday I shall die.'

"And so in fact it was. Before midday she died. And all the people of Favara came out of their houses to see the saint whom the Angel One-hundred-and-one and the souls from Purgatory had that night escorted up to the gates of the village."

Donna Gesa finished speaking. Her master, *Mon-signore*, Gaglio and I, remained silent in admiration;

but Sebastiano Terilli, shaking himself, exclaimed:

"By my soul, what a miracle! Is that the miracle? But what miracle is that? Excuse me. . . . A miracle? Why a miracle? We will admit everything; we will admit that the old woman did not die of fear, and that she was not the victim of a hallucination, which would be nevertheless quite understandable in one who believed that every night she talked to the souls in Purgatory and to this Angel One-hundred-and-one. We will even admit that the angel really appeared and spoke to her. What then? Far from being a miracle, it was nothing but an act of the greatest cruelty to announce to a poor old woman her imminent death! Why, excuse me, we all of us only live on condition that. . . ."

Celestina Calandra here stretched out his hand to reply, and that eternal discussion began again with even greater vehemence than before.

But the faith, the faith! Must we not take into consideration the faith with which these poor people sustain and comfort themselves? So-called intellectual men do not perceive, are unable to perceive, anything but life, and never give a thought to death. Science, discoveries, fame and power are what they seek; and they ask themselves how the ignorant poor, those who dig the ground and seem to be condemned to the hardest and most humble labours, manage to live without all these great and fine things; how they manage to live and why; meanwhile despising them as being no better

than the brutes. Little do they know that a higher spiritual truth, as compared with which all the great discoveries of science, the dominion of the world and the glory of the arts become nothing but vain and foolish trifles, dwells as a most unshaken conviction in those simple souls and renders death as desirable to them as a just reward.

Who knows how long this discussion about the miracle of the Angel One-hundred-and-one might have continued, if another miracle, and this time a true, authentic, unquestionable one, had not suddenly cut it short. Stefano Traina, with his shot-gun in his hand, burst into the dining-room breathless and exultant, his face flushed, scratched, smudged and purple with excitement.

He had succeeded at last in killing a starling!

SEBASTIAN, THE BLACK DEVIL

By ALBRECHT SCHAEFFER

(German)

THE house was low and wide, one story high.

The walls were white, the timbers dividing them pale red, the lofty roof black and the window frames of a bright blue color.

From a door, painted red and surmounted by the antlers of an elk, three gradually widening steps led into the garden. This was about ninety yards square and enclosed on three sides by a wall more than six feet high and dark green in color. There was a high iron gate at the far end of a sand path, and this led to the door located at the middle of the house. From this gate one could see a grass-covered road lying between tall rows of pines, whose branches completely hid the house and the garden.

Paths of sand divided the garden into a number of spaces.

Only a few butterfly-like leaves of green lettuce plants were to be seen scattered over the brown earth of the half which was devoted to the raising of vegetables. Hardy green bushes grew in the other half of the garden. On some, pale yellow blossoms

were already to be seen. Along the borders of the paths there were red and white hyacinths. A small yellow plot of sand stood out in the middle of the garden and was surrounded by stalks of rose plants. In this sandy area, there was a coffin, resting at its two ends upon chairs. The coffin was simply a plain pine box painted blue like the windows of the house. In front of one of these, resting against the window frame, was a woman, quite young, dressed in deep mourning, with her hands folded in her lap. The hands were unattractive, thin and brown, those of a girl who was no stranger to every kind of house and kitchen, garden and even stable work. Her form, however, was full and maternal at the shoulders and hips. Her features still retained the rosy outlines of youth in spite of tiny wrinkles on the forehead and temples. Her hair was auburn and hung down over her neck, which was bent forwards. She sat thus, gazing with clear but resolute eyes at the coffin. Her peaceful expression was that of a person who has been freed from oppression. There were no signs of grief or tears.

Only the rustling of the leaves of the pines, and, from somewhere, the voices of children, broke the silence of the sunshiny day.

She arose and entered the house. The room was filled with shadows—the ceiling white, but low, and every part of the floor space, a bit too full of well-chosen old furniture in harmony with the lofty secretary with its many small drawers and, above, an ex-

tension to be used for writing. She sat down and after taking paper from one drawer, a penholder from another, and an inkwell, she adjusted some horn-rimmed spectacles to her eyes. Seated thus, she seemed more like a boarding school pupil full of zeal for knowledge. She wrote thus:

MY DEAR HILDA:

You ask whether we are not victims of the guerrilla-like strife between the Bolsheviks and White Guard. Our little forester's house lies several miles distant from the already isolated castle.

The woods and swamps around us are almost impenetrable and so far only one shot has been fired. This occurred day before yesterday late at night and came from a poacher's gun. And Egon is dead now. Yes, when I turn, I see his curious coffin in the middle of the garden. One of our forestry helpers built the coffin out of boards which we had planned to use for a new floor. He painted it blue with some paint which had been left over from use on the window frames. This worker said that the boards would not rot so easily if painted, but it seemed to me as if he had used the blue paint because of his lack of regret at Egon's death.

Do you consider me devoid of feeling? No, you know me better than that. This shot only spelled emancipation for Egon from a drunkard's life, so thoroughly wasted. It also means freedom for me. Without my mother's constant protection, how could I ever have endured the misery of these years. And oh, how I have tried to keep my children pure despite their association with their own father. No more of this sad chapter of my life.

David Nikoleit is the name of the man who killed

Egon. His wife is young and he has three children more than I have. Egon was found, shot through the forehead, still grasping his gun. Only a second more and Nikoleit would be lying there where Egon does, now. Nikoleit had been a sharpshooter in the war, but even so, Egon's usually lazy hand did not fail him when rapid firing was needed.

But it is better thus. I only hope that this other father has been able to escape across the border and for his children I hope—

The noise of a shot fired quite close by, suddenly caused the one who was writing to tremble so that the pen was forced into the paper and the ink spattered all over her hand.

There, two paces inside of the iron garden gate, the outlines of a man were to be seen on the sandy path, as, frightened, she looked through the window. He was more than six feet tall, wore a black cloak and a Cossack cap of black fur. His cloak extended down and covered his riding boots like a skirt. At the waist, a white belt was drawn so tightly that its owner looked like a wasp. This giant stood there, dark and rigid, his left hand enclosed in a white glove, resting on his hip. In the other hand, he held an army revolver pointed upwards. Blue smoke was still visible at the muzzle of the weapon. Her terror-stricken gaze did not rest on the revolver, but on the stranger himself. He seemed to her more like a branch or the root of a tree, so long and narrow, so crooked and deformed, as if he had appeared as a mythical figure in a dream.

His eyes, almost hidden beneath bushy black eyebrows, were so close together that they seemed to be united. It was a monster, a repulsive growth with eyes through which no human being saw, only a vile terror.

He lowered his weapon in machinelike manner and placed it in a holster attached to his belt. Beyond the garden, on the grassy path between the pines, a sorrel-colored horse was to be seen. A huge greyhound was sniffing along the borders of the garden plots.

From a window, a voice, with an air of surprise, asked, "Why this shooting?" In language which was not that of a German, there came the response. "To announce my presence."

"And what do you wish," she asked.

"Want you to come out into the garden."

She turned around, placing her spectacles on a bench, approached the door, which was suddenly opened from without at the same time that the shrill sound of a whistle was to be heard.

A short elderly woman, dressed in black, with pale, refined features and dark eyes placed beneath a smooth forehead, appeared in the doorway. Although she tried to reassure her daughter, the latter entered the hall. At the same time, an evil-looking Cossack, with gun across his back, entered the back door and behind him a second one, on horseback, was to be seen beyond the orchard.

The Cossack who had entered the house pushed the door aside and made some announcement in Russian.

Clara, the younger of the two women, hurriedly closed the door and said to her mother, standing at the window on the opposite side of the room:

"Mother, what is that shadow in the garden which almost eclipses the sun?"

"Clara, we are under the protection of God."

One could hear the sound of the other Cossack's heavy boots, crossing the floor.

The door against which Clara had been leaning was suddenly opened and a Cossack announced something in his native tongue. Clara and her mother did not pay any attention to him and walked towards the garden.

There she saw the officer standing next to the coffin, appearing to her like a black giant. He pointed to it but did not venture to touch the blue paint. Seeing Clara, he grasped the back of the chair which supported one end of the coffin and pulled it towards him. The unsupported end of the coffin was precipitated to the ground.

He sat down on the chair he had thus obtained and exclaimed, "Whom have I the honor to address?"

"Madame Sugrada," Clara responded.

Saluting her, he replied "Count" and then some incomprehensible Russian surname.

Then, throwing back his cloak, he sat down and with fists resting on his knees, asked Clara:

"How does a lady like you happen to be in such an isolated spot?"

She replied, gazing at the coffin, "My husband was a forester here and was shot yesterday by a poacher. We formerly owned an estate, but could not afford to keep it up. During the period of deflation, we lost all we possessed and were happy to secure a position as forester here on the estate of a relative. My husband was much younger than I, entered the War early and thus had no profession or trade.

Without having paid much attention to her explanations, the officer said, "Interesting. Now we must search your house." Looking up, he nodded to the Cossacks and they immediately disappeared in the house.

Clara cried to her mother, "Go to the children at once." Then when she heard heavy footsteps in the house, the slamming of doors and the moving about of furniture, with a voice full of rage and indignation, she addressed the officer, saying, "What justification is there for all this search?"

"I will explain," he replied. "We are looking for a certain Wladimer Stepansky, alias Wlanka, leader of a gang, a Bolshevik. I saw him wounded during a fight in another house and then he escaped into the woods. My bloodhound and I followed his trail to this spot."

The dog had already tried to scent the trail along Clara's skirt, wagging his tail to and fro.

"By the way," the officer said, looking down at his dog, "why are there no hounds here?"

"I gave the woodchoppers permission to take our dogs into the forest. They were constantly howling around the coffin."

When he saw a tear rolling down her cheek, he opened his mouth smilingly, showing two rows of beautiful white teeth in an otherwise expressionless face and said, "Can understand your situation well. One is not sad, but if husband were here, you would feel less alarmed." Thereupon, he at once demanded, "Who is in the house?"

She replied, "My mother and my two children."

"Nobody else?" he asked.

"The woodchoppers are in the forest."

"Nobody else?" he reiterated.

"My husband," she replied, pointing to the wooden coffin.

"Nobody else?" he monotonously demanded.

"Your soldiers can search, all they care to."

"A confession would be more welcome, from you."

"Do you think that I am a Bolshevist?" she asked angrily.

Without replying directly, he smiled and after a bit said, "Nowadays every one is something else. Madame is certainly a benevolent person."

She sighed and then tried to smile, replying, "Yes, but I am telling the truth, I will swear it."

The Cossacks emerged from the house, reported to

the officer, who waved his hand towards a woodshed at one corner of the garden and indicated that the soldiers should search there for the fugitive. She heard wood being thrown about and then her mother appeared at the door of the house, saying, "The children are quiet now but insisted upon being near you."

The Cossacks were now coming out of the woodshed, their guns slung over their shoulders and carrying something. At a nod from the officer, they placed what they had found at his feet. The objects consisted of an empty wine bottle, a glass, a plate and a silver table knife.

Clara stared at these, terrified.

"So," said the officer, "Wlanka is here."

She stretched out her hands towards her mother and saw her standing with hands clasped together and face full of piety, gazing upwards.

The giant arose and placing his right hand on his revolver said, "Tell me where the person is to be found who ate from this plate. You pretend not to know? You do not want to say who ate here. Please tell me."

At first silent, her lips gradually separated as she said in a most earnest manner, "For the last time, let me tell you that I have no knowledge of any one being hidden here."

"You lie," he exclaimed.

The colour rushed to her cheeks. The voices of two children, crying, were to be heard, and then they appeared in the doorway. One was a tall, slim boy

with light hair, clad in a green smock, the other, a shorter, more robust looking girl. Both grasped their mother, crying, "Oh, the soldiers, we are so afraid of them." Clara knelt, and embraced and quieted them as though this was the only task she had in the world. Then turning partly towards the officer, said, "You will permit me to put the children to bed now, I hope."

"Cannot allow it," he replied.

"You will not let my mother do it?"

"No, neither she nor you must leave here."

"Why?"

"Children safe here, for you and me."

Clara arose and angrily addressed him, "What do you want?"

"Only the truth."

"O, Lord above, and if I—" she broke down and began to cry, but observed that he had pulled his revolver out of its holster.

Her expression changed to one of alarm, hair hanging down over her face, with glassy eyes, the gaping mouth twitching, the picture of despair. The two children, crying again, tried to throw their arms around her, whilst she aimlessly felt for their shoulders and hands. She finally gasped these words:

"What do you want?"

He replied, "Shoot you."

She tried to escape and pushed the children towards her mother. The Cossacks behind her had anticipated

Clara's efforts to flee. One grasped her around the waist, the other held the frightened children. Just at this moment, her mother ran to the back door of the house, closed it hastily and disappeared. One could hear a key turn in the lock, followed by silence. The Cossacks released their hold on Clara and the children.

Supporting herself on the frame of the door, Clara glanced slowly, as if stupefied, around at her children, at the garden and at the tall dark giant out there against the sun.

Her entire countenance took on a most peaceful aspect, only her lips trembling, as she mumbled sadly, "This must have been a dream. But now, I would like to wake up."

"My mother has taken flight. This explains everything. Alas, I cannot ask her for any more information."

The giant was silent for a bit, but slowly opened his eyes widely and said, looking upwards, "You will be shot."

Her hand clutched the frame of the door. Her eyes turned right, then left, like birds being pursued. Everything seemed to be passing before her, the azure blue sky, pink and white flowers, the coffin resting crookedly on one chair, children's garments, all fragments of distorted reality, of life, floating in a detached way, in the air. Between these, she saw trunks of trees in the darkness, the dead man living again, the

shot about to be fired and then reaching its goal, and then out there outlined against the bright sunshine, this giant, so dark and inhuman.

This last impression remained fixed, however, and, taking her children by the hand, she drew them towards her and said, "I am allowed to go into the house again, am I not? This is really too much for the children." The Russian officer gave some orders in his own tongue, at the same time, shifting his chair into another position. One of the soldiers took the children from her and held the trembling little ones on his knees after he had sat down on the chair. Clara was led over towards the front wall of the house. Standing here and looking straight ahead, she was able to glance a little towards her children. The officer walked ten paces from her and then turned around, facing her, with revolver ready to fire. She looked down the muzzle of the weapon and with an attempt to smile, asked huskily:

"Can I not offer you anything else?"

"With a sardonic grin, he replied, "Not interested in anything else." He then ordered her to turn around. Tears ran down her cheeks, she lowered her head somewhat and said almost inaudibly, "Please, not in the presence of the children."

He demanded, "Where is Wlanka?"

"Please, if you please," she repeated.

"Where is Wlanka?"

She was silent. Her head bent down and the Cos-

sack sprang forwards and turned her towards the wall. Her shoulder blades, between which the shot was to reach its goal, twitched visibly, her hands which had been forced above her head, clutched the wall whilst she said, "Shoot, shoot." The revolver was lowered somewhat for a moment. Suddenly, a rough deep voice called from the woodshed, "Hello, there!"

The officer turned towards the shed, where he saw a man, no less powerful than himself, clothed in a ragged German uniform, the frayed trouser ends scarcely reaching to his ankles and exposing bare red feet. This giant was bareheaded, the hair of his scalp and of his beard formed a Zeus-like brown frame for small but fierce eyes. His mouth was opened widely and one could note a quivering of the lips. He had an army gun on one side of his huge frame and around his waist a belt with cartridge pouches, to right and left.

In an imperious tone he called out, "Lay down revolver."

Instead of obeying this command, the officer made a movement as if to bring his revolver into action, but a shot from the woodshed soon stopped this. The officer's huge army revolver flew into the air and he held up his white glove with fingers spread apart. One could see the thumb hanging loose from the rest of the hand and blood trickling to the ground.

The two Cossacks now ran through the garden to the door. Another shot was heard and one of the

Cossacks fell forwards, carrying his fellow soldier down with him. The Cossack who had been knocked down by the falling body of his fellow, arose at once and, mounting the horse waiting outside of the garden, rode at top speed into the woods. The officer pressed his handkerchief to the bleeding thumb.

Clara's mother ran down the steps to her daughter, at whose feet the children were lying, crying and terror stricken.

The sharpshooter ran from the shed to Clara and said, "For God's sake, woman, wake up. Everything is over. It was only I, David, who shot." His angry glances fell upon the huge black officer, still pressing a handkerchief to his thumb. In a voice full of rage he yelled, "It is you, beast. What have you tried to do here. Kill this poor woman, and even her children, or try to scare them to death, you Bolshevik." And he sobbed violently.

Clara, who had fainted, opened her eyes again and looking up at the sharpshooter, said, "Oh, David, you have shot again." To this, she added in a whisper, "You noble fellow."

David began to cry and threw himself at her feet, kissing her hand innumerable times. Grasping his gun he called to the women, "Get away from here as quick as you can, as far as possible. Something will happen here pretty soon." He almost pushed the women into the house.

David now tore off the officer's belt and tied his hands

together with it. He lifted the black giant up as if he were a doll and carried him to the iron gate of the garden. Unloosening the strap from his own gun, David lifted the officer's hands above his head and tied them to the iron garden gate.

Looking directly into the officer's almost expressionless eyes, David exclaimed, "You are a repulsive sight, aren't you?" His gaze moved from head to foot of the black giant and in a sarcastic tone, asked, "Where is Wlanka? I know where he is, I found him this morning, more dead than alive, and if we had not run across Clara's mother, we would never have been able to carry him to the woodshed. The Bolshevik, the accursed one. You're all Bolsheviks. You have fallen into a trap looking for Wlanka. Didn't you notice that the red terrorists all have gone ahead and here you are, all alone and lost." There was no reply from the officer and David in a more gentle voice said, "There you stand unable to make a move, Bolshevik or whatever you may be. You belong neither to the Whites nor the Reds, you devil of a Sebastian. I'll treat you just as you wanted to do with this woman." Turning about, David walked towards the house. Looking at the coffin resting at one end on the ground, David said to himself, "Was he so cruel as to take the other chair on which this coffin was resting, for himself?"

Bringing back the chair, he lifted up the coffin with one hand and placed the chair under it again. Turn-

ing to the officer, bound to the garden gate, he said, "I am not responsible for his death," pointing towards the coffin. "Many a one have I killed in Russia and France who was never able to see me, hidden in the trees. It was disagreeable, but all for our country. Why did this forester deny me a rabbit for my wife and children? Would that I had all the cannons of the world here and might point them at you. Say something. Do you still think that I am the slave and you the master."

Without even a murmur, Black Sebastian, tied up as he was, never uttered a cry as David fired one shot after another at him.

Yelling at him again, David said, "Speak, you who have devoted your life to persecuting others." Only one word escaped the dying giant's lips, and David leaned forward only to hear "Beast."

With almost superhuman strength, David dragged the bodies of Black Sebastian, the Cossack officer, and his soldier into the forest. Close by was a lake and to its icy waters he consigned the mortal remains of those who so cruelly had tortured poor Clara.

After having completed his gruesome task, David looked up and espied the pallid face of Clara standing under the trees.

He said, "Have no fear of any such annoyance again."

She replied, "Oh, you are a wonderful shot and I owe you my life."

David simply sang his familiar "Hello, Hello" and disappeared into the forest. Clara entered the house and sat down at the desk again where her unfinished letter stared at her. Looking out through the windows of the night, she saw the tops of the tall pines waving to and fro and the moon in the sky standing out like a silvery crescent. Down there in the garden, everything was unchanged, the coffin, the shrubs, the bright colored flowers, not a trace of the awful scenes of the afternoon.

Suddenly a veil obscured her view and the garden seemed to move, then to suddenly stand still. In front of the woodshed stood David again, like a giant, his huge figure outlined against the dark night, his gun at his side. There, two feet from the iron gate, stood again Black Sebastian, like a puppet, with white glove on one hip, his gun in the other hand. Down there in front of the coffin, the image of her husband lying on the ground, ready to fire at David. These three seemed to remain there an interminable period, one taking aim at the other. Then they all disappeared and the garden was empty again.

Clara, sobbing violently, threw herself on the window-seat and prayed. There was peace again above and on earth and gradually her sobbing ceased.

STANOJA

By BORA STANKOVIC

(Serbian)

EVERY one in the bazaar and lower quarter knew him. On market days he would borrow two or three *dinars* from any one he could, and do a little trade in trifles, buying and reselling them. Then he returned the loan and drank the proceeds.

People tell, and he often boasted himself, that he had once been well-to-do; that he had been a grocer, and had kept a shop, a house and a lame sister. But somehow, from the time my uncle married Aunt, he had taken to drink. Little by little he let the shop go; he gave the house to his sister and went out to work, until in the end he came to Uncle, not asking for pay, but only his keep, old clothes, and a place to sleep in the stable.

When he was drunk, he would collect all Aunt's children and me with them, and take us round the sweet shops, buying us whatever we wanted. Then he would send us back to tell Aunt all about it, while he would come along behind and look on smiling, singing his favourite song:

Ho, landlord, landlord,
Give me wine and brandy,
To drink myself drunk,
To drown all my cares.

"Yes, you may sing, but what about tomorrow?" Aunt would greet him angrily.

He would stop, lean against the wall, and regard her in a curious way.

"Why not? Did you give it to me? . . . My money!" And, as if to spite her he would squat on the ground, crossing his legs, fling his cap on the ground, and taking out a brandy flask from his belt, drink and go on singing.

But when he was sober he worked like an ant. Whatever he was told to do, he just did without question. Occasionally when he couldn't stand us children teasing and chasing round him, he would throw down his work, drive us away, and then march off. But no matter who had vexed him, if Aunt should come up, and put her hand on his shoulder, and plead with him in a gentle voice, "Stanoja,¹ why are you angry? Come and do so and so!" he would set about the job like wildfire?

Uncle was a rough man. His word was law in the house. He would often beat Aunt and drive her out of doors. And, especially when he was drunk, it was best, as they say, to make yourself scarce. I recollect one day. He came home drunk, seized Aunt, held her

¹ Pronounced Stanoya.

down and beat her like a fiend. In terror, we hid ourselves in the barns. Just then Stanoja was behind the house, chopping wood at the stack in the yard. As long as Aunt made no sound, nothing happened. But when Uncle caught her hair, wound it round his hand, and began dragging and banging her round the house like mad, she gave a low stifled cry. Stanoja, hearing it, listened to make sure that it was her voice, then quickly dropped his work, threw aside his axe and hurried indoors.

"Don't, Stanoja," we cried from our hiding place.

"Hold your tongues, you!" He cut us short, but his voice was trembling.

Entering the room, he pushed himself between Aunt and Uncle. Him he caught by the wrist, so that Aunt freed herself and fled.

Then he let go Uncle's hand, and standing there before him, began to plead.

"Don't, master. It is sinful. Don't!" He begged for her. "She is only a woman . . ." Uncle stopped dumbfounded, his whole body quivering with rage.

"How dare you, you cur!" he shouted half-suffocated, and snatching a stick, he struck Stanoja over the head. The blood spurted out. Stanoja reeled, and, all streaming with blood, reached the well outside, bathed his head, and put tobacco on the wound to stop the bleeding. Then thrusting his hands into his belt, he staggered away with bent head.

Perhaps it was because of this that Aunt was kind

to him. Every evening she gave him a large glass of wine with his supper. Then there were always old clothes, and in winter blankets so that he had something to cover him at nights.

One day Aunt fell ill. Uncle was away, and there was no one to look after the house and the children. Stanoja took over everything. He cleaned the house, saw to the children, dressed them and did all the housework, just like a woman. And then, in the evening, when everything was done and the children were settled and asleep, he would sit on the threshold of the room where Aunt lay and keep watch all night in case she should want anything. If by any chance he heard the women say that she ought to be given something, he would rush off at once and get it. One day he stuffed his belt and bosom with oranges, lemons and other fruit. He smiled as he went, while we ran along beside him asking for some. But he refused.

“Run away! They are not for you.”

He went into Aunt's room, and heaped them all before her without a word.

Aunt was quite taken aback, and looked at him angrily.

“Are you mad? What is the use of those to me?”

He made no answer, but scratched his head.

“Tell me, what good are they to me? Where did you get the money? I tell you I don't want them. I won't have them!” And she began to throw them down and push them away from her.

Bending down, he picked up all she had flung down and offered them to her again.

"Try some," holding them out.

Aunt was vexed because he must needs go and spend money when he had nothing for himself. She frowned and would not look at him.

"No, I won't. You don't look after yourself. How long will you go on, like this?"

"Never you mind. . . . Just as long as I live. . . . It is fate!" . . . His voice was trembling more than ever.

What could she do? Not to deny him altogether, she took some fruit and tasted it, whereupon, wild with joy, he rushed into the kitchen, picked up us children and jumped us up to the ceiling.

All the time she was ill he did not taste a drop of drink. But as soon as she was up, he went off, and drank like a fish.

Uncle drank too. It was really a well-to-do house, with everything in plenty, except love and harmony. Poor Aunt! Tall, dark and thin, with big, black eyes, long thin brows, and small drawn mouth. She worked like a slave. From early dawn till far into the night, she was always busy. Ever so often she came to our house in the middle of the night to escape from Uncle while he was drunk. She would sleep with us till he was sober, but always went back before dawn. She began to ail "on her feet," but nobody took it seriously.

One day, however, she took to bed, never to get up again.

It was an autumn evening. The weather had turned chilly. A big fire was blazing in the kitchen. We children were squatting round it with our bare feet in the cinders, roasting maize cobs on the embers. Aunt lay in the small room. She must have been very ill, for my mother and the other women were constantly going in and out and whispering. Stanoja, as usual, sat outside her door, huddled up and silent. Suddenly the door opened and Uncle came out.

"Go in," he said to Stanoja, "she wants you." And he sat down on the stool by the fire, burying his head in his hands.

Stanoja went in, leaving the door open behind him.

"Stanoja!" Aunt's exhausted voice was feebly audible. "Pull yourself together, Stanoja; pull yourself together, for I shan't be here much longer, and you have no one in the world. You are alone. Give up the drink. Good-bye, and—forgive me!"

I looked at Uncle. His eyes were moist, and his eyelids swollen with welling tears. His moustache twitched.

All sobbing and choking, Stanoja came out and sat down again in his corner by the door. He plunged his hairy face into his ungainly hands and sobbed. Tears trickled down his hands.

Uncle looked at him darkly.

"What are you crying for? Be quiet!" He snapped at him and waved us children off to bed.

"Oh! Ma-a-aster!" I heard Stanoja's dull voice.

Two days afterwards we buried Aunt.

The days passed. Stanoja went steadily downhill, and Uncle's house also began to go to pieces. Stanoja left, and went from house to house in the quarter. He worked at wood-chopping, butchering, grave-digging; anything that was given him.

Summer or winter, it was all the same to him. In torn trousers, some sort of a belt, and the rags of a shirt, he went his way. His thick hair, low, wrinkled forehead, small nose, thick mouth, prominent cheekbones and strong jaws with their thick bristly beard, had all grown wild, gloomy and sad. With his vacant, withered expression, his bare, hairy chest and absent, mournful look, he left a strong impression, almost revolting in its misery. When he stopped before anyone, dropped his eyes and began to beg in a dead, toneless, monotonous voice, it was enough to make one run away rather than look at such an object. He slept at our house. We had given him a little room. Mother had often given him night clothes, but he invariably carried them away at once, sold them and got drunk.

Some years later my Mother died, and in order to make her grave we had to dig up Aunt's. Stanoja was there, and willingly agreed to dig a grave for Mother. He took his spade, and standing before me, asked:

"Shall I go, Milé?"

"Yes, go, Stanoja, but remember to collect the bones carefully."

"All right, I will."

"But do you know whose grave you will have to dig up?"

"No."

"Aunt's."

"I won't," he said; and, blanched and terrified, he sat down on the ground.

"Why not?"

"I won't, I won't," and, all of a tremble, he gesticulated something away from him with his hands.

"Why? Then do you want some one else to dig up the grave?"

He got up.

I brought him a little brandy.

"No, no. Give me a whole oka,² an oka." He began to draw back.

"Afterwards, Stanoja. This is enough, for now. You will get drunk and not know what you are doing."

"No, no! . . . An oka, Milé, an oka . . ."

I fetched a full flask. He took it, held it up to the light, and shook it up. A smile played over his moustache. He lifted the flask and drank off half.

"Ah!" He shuddered. Then he took the spade and went.

In the afternoon they gave me a clean linen bag to

² An old Turkish measure of $1\frac{1}{2}$ litres.

go to the graveyard and collect Aunt's bones. A requiem would be sung over them, and then they would be buried with Mother's coffin in the grave.

I went. From afar I saw a heap of black earth, pieces of rotten boards, earthy clothes and mouldy shoes strewn about above Aunt's grave. On the edge stood the empty flask, with Stanoja's spade and jacket beside it.

I bent over the grave, but drew back quickly in a fright.

On the floor of the grave were arranged Aunt's bones, head, arms, ribs . . . and above them, leaning on his pick, all earth-soiled, with knitted brows, dishevelled dirty hair and bare, black, grizzled chest, stood Stanoja, gazing at them.

I recoiled and looked upwards. The sky was clear and blue. In the distance beyond the fence, the gardens and vineyards were shining and green. In the pure dry air the larks and swallows were calling. I summoned up my courage and looked once more into the grave. Stanoja was passing his dirty soiled hand over his eyes. Suddenly he fell prostrate over the bones.

"Oh! Kata . . . that I should do this for you. . . . I! . . ."

"Stanoja!" I cried, terrified.

"What?" He sprang up and turned on me a terrible look, but, when he saw who I was, he swiftly

recollected himself, took the pick and began to dig, whispering, "It is you, Milé!"

I gave him the bag.

"Collect them in this," I said, and my voice quavered.

"Very well, in a minute . . ." he began submissively. He took the bag, bent down slowly, crossed himself, and began collecting the bones as if they were the holiest relics. His hands trembled, and from time to time the tears would roll down his earthy face.

"What are you crying for?"

He raised his head, and regarded me with a look which told all: a buried love, a wasted life, and an endless sorrow.

Some years later he died. They say that just before his death he escaped from the hospital, and the attendants found him dead on the road leading to the graveyard.

SABHA

A Modern Egyptian Short Story

By MAHMOUD TEYMOUR

ABDEL SAMEI the peasant was sitting on a large boulder at the side of an abandoned old barn which was rapidly decaying, looking up the main road, paved for carriages, cars and animals, which cuts through the property of Hassan Agha and neighbouring properties right up to the railway station, and along which two straight lines of acacias form a fine avenue. He was gazing at the main road, anxiously trying to pick out some one from amongst the children leading their animals, men carrying the shovels on their shoulders and women quietly walking behind their donkeys.

Suddenly a bright smile lit up his face and the gleam of his fine even white teeth could be seen. He got up from his boulder and one could not help remarking what a tall, broad shouldered and muscular man he was and how attractive were his homely features; and his large bare chest with matted hair was noticeable through his open shirt. He fastened his linen cord round his waist so tightly that his faded blue gown

was greatly shortened and showed his two big ankles and robust legs. He called out several times:

"Sabha . . . Sabha . . . Sabha girl! Come here."

The girl turned her head in the direction from which the voice came and, on seeing Abdel Samei advancing towards her, she at once recognised him and a sweet smile spread over her face which she hastily covered with her floating veil. She was walking behind her donkey which carried two empty soft baskets on its back, and, after she had tapped it several times with a short stick which she had in her hand, the donkey understood and immediately started off for home. Sabha left the main road and, wishing to meet Abdel Samei halfway, took a short cut through a crooked path along the side of a small canal. She was deeply moved in spite of her quiet nature and the effort she made to control her feelings, and, nervously, almost completely covered her face in order to hide them. They came face to face and silently walked together towards the old barn. On reaching the boulder they stopped there.

Abdel Samei lowered his head pensively as if trying to decide what he would say, his face wearing a gloomy expression.

"I have not seen you for several days at Hassan Agha's. Have you quarrelled with some one or have you not come for some other reason unknown to me?" remarked Abdel Samei after a pause.

Sabha let her veil fall and began fidgeting with her

dress, not knowing what answer, whilst Abdel Samei hungrily gazed at her sweet face, feasting his eyes with her beauty.

Sabha was a pretty peasant girl, with good features and two lovely black eyes. She was a pure-minded girl, intelligent, sincere, and open in all her ways and acts; deeply religious and self-confident. She had learned to know Abdel Samei in Hassan Agha's, where she worked as an employee and he as the confidential servant of the master of the house. There they fell in love and became so much attached to each other that those around them remarked it and the relatives spoke of it to her father.

Sabha's father greatly despised Abdel Samei, considering him very much beneath his daughter, as he had already chosen the son of the Omda, (the chief of an Egyptian village) a young man of good position, wealthy and neat in his dress, who admired his daughter and wished to make her his wife, and was quite ready to hand over the dowry of thirty pounds to her father; the love of Abdel Samei in comparison was a great insult; and when he asked Sabha's father for her hand in marriage, he was roughly sent away and threatened to be turned out if he returned.

Abdel Samei went back to his master's house, feeling very sad, irritated and ashamed at the treatment he had just received, but determined not to say a word to Sabha about it nor to abandon his love for her at all costs.

Abdel Samei was known by every one to be an upright and honest man and was greatly beloved by his master.

Sabha remained silent so long that Abdel Samei queried, while gazing lovingly at her:

"Have you been ill, Sabha . . . and when will you return to your work?"

Sabha, looking down on the ground with a sad and sorrowful expression, murmured:

"I will not return to my work at Hassan Agha's."

On hearing these words Abdel Samei's eyes hardened with suppressed anger and he exclaimed in a harsh and repulsive voice:

"What! You will not return to Hassan Agha's? Who says such a thing?"

"My father."

"Why?"

"Because he has discovered our love."

"And for this reason he wishes to separate us?"

"Yes, for ever."

"Impossible."

"Why is it impossible, and . . ."

Suddenly breaking off she became silent.

Abdel Samei guessing what she was about to say, in a wrathful voice exclaimed:

"Don't be ashamed, Sabha, and finish what you are trying to hide; say you are engaged to the Omda's son . . . but I swear to you . . ."

Feeling as if he would choke, his eyes becoming inflamed and his veins standing out like cords, he swallowed the dry lump in his throat and huskily said:

"I swear to you that this marriage will never take place . . . never, never. . . . As long as I live you shall never belong to any other man but me."

It was the first time that Sabha had ever heard Abdel Samei speak in such a hard tone of voice and look so wild; she was quite frightened and rapidly withdrew her eyes from him. . . . Could this be Abdel Samei, the quiet, patient submissive man, who up to the present moment had always lived a peaceful life and had never fought nor had even had a dispute with any one?

Abdel Samei breathed with great difficulty and trembled as if he had been seized by a strong fever. After a time when the attack had passed and he had regained his self-possession, Sabha, quietly and tenderly, said to him:

"Abdel Samei, what would you like me to do? . . . Do you wish me to disobey my father? . . . How can I do such a thing?"

"Then you don't love me, Sabha," he replied.

The girl remained silent for a moment, then suddenly burst into tears; on seeing which Abdel Samei felt as if a dagger was being turned in his heart. Approaching the girl with eyes full of compassion, he gently led her to the interior of the old barn, and seat-

ing Sabha on a heap of straw began to dry her tears and contritely said to her:

"Don't weep, Sabha. Your tears cut me to the heart. I am quite sure of your love; but the thought of your engagement to another is unbearable to me, and I shall do all in my power to break it. I will speak to your father and try to get him to accept me . . . and surely he will do so . . . surely . . . surely."

Sabha turned her head, and her eyes were full of tears when she looked up at him and said:

"How can you get my father to consent to our love? Have you not already asked my hand in marriage and been refused? Did you think I was unaware of the steps you had taken?"

Abdel Samei wished to answer her but was choked with emotion. For a short time he remained perplexed, his eyes at the same time lit up with hope and darkened with despair, he unconsciously muttered:

"But this time I have the means."

"What means?"

For a moment Abdel Samei hesitated and remained silent, rolling his eyes about. Then looking on all sides he whispered in the girl's ear saying:

"I have the dowry . . . by this means I can win you."

Sabha dried her eyes and her nose on her sleeves, her face lighting up with a bright smile as she eagerly exclaimed:

"What, Abdel Samei . . . Have you got the dowry . . . the thirty pounds?"

"Yes, I have them here in my pocket. . . . Would you like to see them?"

Putting his hand into his pocket he pulled out a roll of banknotes and in a moved voice began counting them before her, the money shaking in his hand meanwhile. When he had finished counting them he looked at her with a perplexed smile and said:

"That is your money, Sabha, your dowry which I am going to hand over to your father. Take it in your own hands and feel it . . . take it . . . take it."

He insisted upon her taking the money but the girl made no move to do so. Suddenly her bright smile disappeared and her eyes were full of wistfulness as she asked him in a serious tone of voice:

"Where did you get such a sum of money? We all know that you are very poor."

It was a delicate, bold and unexpected question which greatly upset Abdel Samei. Knitting his brows and frowning, he replied in an angry tone which he could not control:

"That is my business. It does not matter to you where I got the money. I have it and that is quite enough. It is mine and I shall hand it over to your father as your dowry."

Sabha still in her thoughtful mood continued her speech aloud, as if talking to herself.

"You have no cattle that you could have sold and so procured money, nor have you any relatives who could have lent you any, and as for your master he is too miserly to give you more than your bare wages. . . ."

Sabha's face suddenly darkened; and staring at him very much frightened, she approached him and said in a low voice:

"No . . . it is not you . . . it can't be . . . but why do you tremble so?"

Then suddenly realising the truth, the girl shouted:

"This money is not yours . . . you dare not touch it . . . it is Hassan Agha's money . . . the same thirty pounds which were stolen from his house a few days ago."

On hearing the words Abdel Samei's face became quite gloomy and he furiously exclaimed:

"What folly . . . me a thief, you dare accuse me of theft?"

"Then where did you get the money?"

Abdel Samei stuttered a few words which were quite incomprehensible. A nasty and brutal expression spread over his face, and Sabha, reading between the lines, saw there both pain and shame. Abdel Samei's eyes were damp with unshed tears—tears of disappointment and degradation. At that moment she saw the complete collapse of the "man's" pride before her—the weak submissive "woman." She no longer

feared him but looked upon him with pitying eyes, and going up to him put her arms around his shoulder and tried to soothe him, saying:

"Abdel Samei don't be angry with me. I love you and only wish your welfare and happiness. Return the money to its owner, as such money is cursed and can bring no blessing with it. You must return it and God will forgive your sinful act. You must, you really must Abdel Samei. You are a good man and every one knows you are upright and honest. Don't soil your reputation. Promise me you will return the money, unknown to its owner."

While she thus spoke, the tears ran down Sabha's cheeks. Abdel Samei in a firm voice, answered her:

"No, I will not return the money. It is mine now and I will pay it for your dowry."

Sabha burst into tears, and, hiding her face in her hands, sobbed in a choking voice:

"I can never, never accept stolen money for my dowry. God would not bless our marriage. I can't accept such a thing."

Abdel Samei approached her, and bending said passionately:

"And I can never accept to give you up and cannot imagine you the wife of any other man. For this reason I committed such a sin and stole the money from my master and benefactor. It is quite true and I was justified in doing so. I am a poor helpless man and my rival is rich and powerful. He will surely win

and I shall be vanquished; but with what other weapon could I fight him? You can't imagine how much I suffered when I heard of your engagement. I nearly became mad and passed the night huddled up in front of my door staring into the void. Suddenly the idea came to me, I don't know from where, probably it was the Devil whispering in my ear. He proved to be a kind adviser in this case, because he showed the way in which to obtain you. I then remembered that my master, Hassan Agha, had received fifty pounds, the rent of a part of his property, two days ago. I also knew that the money was still lying in the safe in his room. Suddenly I rose up and muttering to myself said: 'What is thirty pounds to my master who hoards up his money in the bank and lends it out at such high interest to the poor peasants? But for me such a sum is my all, my happiness depends upon it? In such a way was the theft committed. All this I have done for you Sabha. Forgive me as I hope to be forgiven by God before Whom I shall do penance and pray much in order to wash away this great sin, the one and only sin of my life.'

Sabha listened to him, sobbing all the time and suddenly she felt Abdel Samei's hot breath approaching her face until his lips touched her cheek, and pushing the money into her hand he hissed at her in a changed and fearful voice:

"I love and adore you, Sabha. It is impossible for me to live without you. You are my soul, the light

of my eyes and the joy of my heart. Take the money, Sabha, and do what you like with it. Do take it."

Suddenly Sabha felt a kiss on her cheek which caused her the feeling of having been bitten by a serpent, at the same time the money touched her hands and burned them like a spark of fire; she screamed out and rapidly drew herself away from Abdel Samei, saying:

"Leave me alone, don't dare to approach me as long as you are in such a mood. I cannot bear the sight of you, Abdel Samei, and I won't permit you to kiss me. Take back the money at once to your master, if you let it come within my reach again I will tear it up into pieces. Leave me, and if you will not do so I shall call out at once as loud as I can for help."

At that moment there stood before Sabha not the meek and humble Abdel Samei but quite a different man, a man whom she had never seen before—resembling a wild beast with large bloodshot eyes and a dark inflamed face; just then he showed the rapid and awful change that had taken place in his soul. He had heard her speech without understanding it and unconsciously approached her while she continued to withdraw—Sabha opened her mouth to shout for help but suddenly found herself clasped tightly in a fierce embrace, at the same time Abdel Samei bellowed out incomprehensible, amorous words and tried to kiss her in spite of all her struggles.

An earnest struggle then took place between the two,

and the girl felt that she would be overcome. She cried out for help but Abdel Samei's hand always smothered her cry; nevertheless from time to time she managed to utter a few broken words and phrases which reached his ears:

"Leave me . . . I will have nothing to do with you . . . I hate you . . . I detest you."

To which he answered in a harsh cruel voice:

"You will never marry another man, you must be mine . . . I love and adore you. . . . You must love me . . . you must."

Sabha managed to give a loud desperate shriek which filled the old barn with its echo, and so frightened Abdel Samei that he felt sure help would immediately come from all sides, and imagined that he saw the girl torn from his grasp and handed over to his rival, whilst he was led off to prison accompanied by the police. Suddenly a thought flashed through his mind which made three things stand out clearly before him: That the girl was only playing with him, that he would lose and his rival would win; that all the country-side would laugh and jeer at his disgrace. Trembling from head to foot he was seized with a new feeling which came from the depth of his soul and made quite a new personality of him. Unconsciously his right hand pressed hard on the girl's neck and he almost smothered her with the other hand which he kept firmly over her mouth to prevent her crying out for help—all the time muttering:

"I will never let you go . . . you will never marry another . . . I love you . . . I will not permit you to betray my secret . . . you must love me."

Suddenly the girl's strength gave way and Abdel Samei, thinking that she had surrendered, loosened his hold of her and she fell on the heap of straw where she lay motionless.

For a short time Abdel Samei gazed at the girl lying on the heap of straw without realising what had really happened. Little by little he became his normal self again, and, trembling from head to foot, threw himself down on the straw and with care and tenderness examined the girl, gently shaking her and speaking to her in a choking voice. All at once he shouted out desperately:

"I didn't do it . . . never, never. . . . It was not I."

Then he began to weep and wail and rolled himself about in the dust and tore his face with his sharp nails.

Hassan Agha happened to be passing the barn at that moment as he had taken a short cut through the field on his way to the mosque, where he wished to perform his sunset prayer, and was deeply engrossed telling his beads as he walked along. He wore as usual his old wide fez which almost covered his ears, his torn black gown and dirty white woollen scarf round his shoulders. While thus walking, he heard a weird sound coming from the barn, and raising his head quickly he earnestly listened, quite forgetting his rosary. The

sound was repeated several times and Hassan Agha advanced towards the place from which it came. On reaching the barn door he saw Abdel Samei creeping through it like a wounded dog, moaning in a hoarse voice; and greatly bewildered he eagerly asked him:

“What is wrong with you, Abdel Samei, and who has wounded you in such a manner?”

Abdel Samei shouted as loud as he could, weeping bitterly as he spoke: “Sabha is dead, my master, and it is I who killed her. Go into the barn where you will see her corpse; and the money which I stole from you scattered around it.”

Then he again began tearing his face with his nails and rolling about in the dust, wailing the while.

Becoming quite stupefied, Hassan Agha glanced into the barn where he saw the girl's body lying on the straw and his precious banknotes strewn about her. He wished to enter the barn but was too much afraid of the corpse; suddenly taking his courage in both hands he closed his eyes and hastily crept in; and groping about the floor began picking up the money until his hand accidentally touched the girl's cold neck. He then sprang up shouting out loudly:

“Help . . . help! . . . Catch the thief. . . . Catch the thief. . . . Catch the murderer . . . murderer.”

MAD BETTY

By J. VRHLICKY

(Slovak)

MAD BETTY was a mother for the third time.

She made a forlorn sight—the poor defenceless creature, exposed to the rage of the elements and her fellow-beings, so utterly alone in the wide world, the victim and butt of every one's laughter, for every one to spit and wreak their will upon.

She tramped from manor to manor and from croft to croft. She had been tramping a good many years now, and nobody knew where she was from or who she belonged to. Nobody even knew how old she was.

She didn't beg. She just stood by the door, leant against the post and showed her teeth, two whole, flashing rows of them. It was a pity so idiotic, repulsive, cynical a grin enshrined them. Her beautiful teeth made you think of the Persian legend which related how Jesus in the company of the Apostles passed a dead, mange-eaten dog; all who went by gave it a kick, but the ever-merciful Christ said to them: "See how beautiful are its teeth."

Except for her beautiful teeth, the poor soul had nothing, absolutely nothing, to put one in mind of

those of whom the Bible says that they are "little lower than the angels." Mentally and physically she was a woebegone wreck of humanity. A writer of the naturalist school would revel in a description of her filthy tattered linen showing the dirty and scratched skin beneath, of her slatternly, ravelled plaits and her loathsome slaver.

Mad Betty doted on rings. She had six or so on each hand, and she loved to play with them and make them glitter in the sun. They were common leaden rings, such as pedlars sell at street stalls.

Her apron was tucked up into little knots which went all round her waist. Whenever she got a farthing or a halfpenny, she would wrap it into a corner of her bodice or chemise; but generally her money was stolen. The village folk knew that, so they stopped giving her money and gave her only food. So she roamed from village to village, sometimes softly crooning to herself and sometimes giggling aloud or now and again quietly weeping.

What was happening in her poor mind?

And this hapless creature was a mother for the third time. Luckily her other children had soon died, perhaps because they were starved or were too sickly. And now she was expecting a third.

Vincent the Vagrant had returned from penal servitude five months earlier. He was a real vagrant "hateful to God and mankind," as they said in the village.

The old folk remembered him well, for he was a notorious poacher and brawler. He had once beaten an old gamekeeper to death. They hadn't been able to prove it, at least not conclusively, and he was said to have had a good lawyer who made out that he had acted in self-defence, and so he had got off with fifteen years. He did his sentence and came back home. Everybody gave him a wide berth. Nobody would take him on, and he became a tramp and a wastrel. All his earnings as a beggar he drank. He had made shift to get through the summer somehow and he wasn't troubling about the winter; if the worst came to the worst, he was resolved to go back to the place he had come from. He was an old stager now and knew what crime to commit to get locked up only for the winter, and be free to roam over the wide world when the warm sun began to shine again.

Vincent was lying in the ditch. Behind the ditch grew a low thicket of birches and hornbeams. The dusty highroad wound and straggled past the poor, dried-up common, until at last it sank out of sight into the valley whence the peaks of thatched roofs could be seen sticking out from above a clump of fruit trees. The moon was up.

All around was the ghostly calm of an oppressive summer evening. Ragged clouds waited expectantly on the horizon, uncertain whether to gather for a storm and swoop down.

Vincent lay in the ditch and gazed at the valley in the direction of the village. He had had a lucky day, he had even managed to grab a few pence which, of course, he had forthwith swilled down at the nearest tavern. He now felt at peace with the world, leant his head against the edge of the ditch, fragrant with wild thyme, and luxuriantly gave free play to his fancy.

A slight womanly figure was coming along the common to the rise on the highroad. Now and again she stopped. Vincent examined her carefully. She came nearer and was crooning loudly.

Now she stopped almost in front of him.

"Hi, come a bit nearer, wench!" a rough voice called out.

She only laughed and took a step forward.

"Come and sit by me," said the voice more softly.

Again she laughed.

"Who do you belong to, eh?"

Another laugh. A strange laugh.

"Where are you off to so late? Come on, I'll take you there."

Again a laugh.

"Are you mad, eh?" Now they both laughed.

A weird duet.

He looked into her face. Her white teeth gleamed in the moonlight like a row of pearls.

"Stay with me a bit."

Again a laugh—and she sat down by his side.

The moon passed behind a cloud.

When it came out again, it saw Betty lying in the ditch. She was sleeping. A man was kneeling by her and a clasp-knife was hacking at the various knots, the big ones and the small ones, which she had made in the apron. The moon saw him untie them hastily one after the other; it was tough work, as they had been pulled tight by those strong white teeth. What a disappointment! A farthing here and there, often only a pebble or a counter, and most of the uselessly tight knots quite empty.

The man swore and put his hand under and round her chemise, felt something more solid, tugged at it with his knife, cut off a lump of rag, tore at it with his teeth and nails and there, glittering in the moonlight, was a solid florin marked with a cross.

"Hee, look, well, that's something," he growled to himself.

He thrust it into his waistcoat pocket, and without looking at his sleeping victim, turned off into the woods.

He did not know it was for that, that Mad Betty had first yielded her body.

THE MILLIONAIRE

By LEOPOLD WEISS

(German)

THE news that an American was coming spread through the town like wildfire. No wonder it made a sensation. During the two years that had passed since this former Austrian province had been given to Rumania, it had been like a remote, forgotten island. Sparse and scanty news from the great world penetrated this neglected district. A foreigner was a great rarity, and the few visitors from abroad became objects of universal attention. Private individuals and government officials were both interested in him. To the one, he represented a living newspaper, a contact with the outer world; and to the other he represented an object of distrust, and possibly a source of additional income.

The news that an American was coming at once aroused a certain skepticism, but those who spread the report spoke so positively that soon all doubt vanished. Other interests faded away, and the central square of the town was full of groups of people discussing the news.

"When did he come?"

"Half an hour ago."

"How is that possible? The train doesn't arrive until evening."

"Fine ideas you have about America. An American would never travel on our wretched railway. He crossed the border by automobile and came here direct."

"Comic people, these Americans. Think of coming all the way from America to see us. There must be something behind it."

"What could be behind it? He only wanted to see his family. That's why he came back."

"Does he come from around here?"

"Certainly he does. What kind of foreigner did you suppose he is? No foreigner would be crazy enough to come to Rumania just to see us. This fellow is Karl Brecht, old Brecht's son."

"So it's Karl Brecht, is it? Why didn't you say that sooner?"

"Do you want me to shout it from the housetops?"

"I only mean why didn't you mention it at once. I knew Karl Brecht as a kid, and it only seems like yesterday that he left for America. Time flies; it must be fifteen or sixteen years since he went away."

"He's rich as mud, they say. He must have over a million dollars."

"I can well believe it. Here, of course, no one can ever get rich; but I wonder if there is any one in

America without money, especially a fellow like Karl Brecht. I always said that he was a smart chap."

"You're talking about Karl Brecht, are you?" said a newcomer. "I've just been talking to his father. He told me that Karl Brecht is the president of three New York clubs."

"President of three clubs!"

"Yes, and a member of a whole lot of societies and associations."

"What does he do in America?"

"What do you suppose? He started in as a worker, like every immigrant, and now he has a factory of his own."

The next day the local newspaper, which appeared three times a week, carried the following article:

A WELCOME GUEST IN OUR HOME TOWN

A well-known fact that fills us all with pride is that so many of our townspeople have made good abroad. In all parts of the world they have won great honors and attained considerable fortunes. Twenty-four hours ago our town received within its gates a welcome guest. Who doesn't remember young Karl Brecht, an attractive fellow full of the spirit of adventure? He set forth into the world about fifteen years ago. His ambitions reached beyond the narrow confines of his home, and he went to America, the land of unlimited possibilities. What would have happened to him if he had stayed at home? He would have become an ordinary workman, or at best a merchant, making a modest living.

But America is the land of unlimited possibilities. There even a newsboy, if he has personal ability, can become President of the United States, and a workman can become a millionaire.

Our fellow townsman, Karl Brecht, has become a millionaire. They say that he has several factories of his own. Besides this, he is the president of three clubs and a member of many distinguished societies. It speaks well for the splendid character of our fellow townsman that in spite of his good fortune he has come home to see his parents who gave him his start in the world, and that he has not forgotten his old home.

Karl Brecht's visit to our town is an honor to us all, but it has a peculiarly private character as well. As a good son and a fine man, he did not let the difficulties of his journey prevent him from seeing his parents, relatives, and friends once more. Nevertheless, we believe that we are not mistaken in saying that something more than private reasons brought Karl Brecht to us, and that he has plans of the greatest importance to our town. In any case, we greet our distinguished guest and bid him welcome, and hope that he will feel at home here.

This article was accompanied by a picture of the American visitor, under which was printed:

AN INTERVIEW BETWEEN OUR REPORTER AND THE DISTINGUISHED AMERICAN

Our honored guest was kind enough to receive our reporter and to enlighten him on the subject of America, and likewise to go into his own plans regarding our town. To the question, "What do you think of America?" he said, "America is all right. (*Ausgezeichnet!*) Every one is alike there. You can talk to a judge or a president as you do to your best friend.

You work, you make a lot of money, and lead a splendid life. Time is money."

"What do you think of the present situation in Europe?"

"Our troops won the war. Our President made the peace. We are the opponents of Bolshevism, and spend a lot of money in behalf of Europe."

"Is your visit of a private character?"

"Yes. I came here to see my relatives, but of course I want to befriend my fellow townsmen, too."

"What do you think of the future of our country and of our town?"

"America will allow no one to go to rack and ruin. She will help everybody. I shall naturally do my best to help wherever I can."

Mr. Brecht was a thin little man with a smooth-shaven, careworn face. He wore a big hat and smoked a fat cigar. A heavy gold watch-chain spanned his chest, and he carried a silver-headed cane that looked bigger than he was. As he walked down the street with his father all eyes were glued upon him. Many people ran up and shook him by the hand. Former classmates who used to call him by his first name did not know how to address him now, and grinned with embarrassment. Mothers of marriageable daughters made inquiries, and discovered to their disgust that he already had a wife and children. The policemen on the street greeted him heartily, and any one who had relatives in America asked for news of them and hoped to receive similar visits.

The whole town was in a fever. The burgomaster,

the commander of the militia, the chief of police, all received the visitor. The volunteer fire department arranged a torchlight parade. The soup kitchen, the hospital, the orphanage, and many other benevolent societies, asked for gifts. Innumerable private people requested loans. The Merchants' Association hastily held an extraordinary session, and decided to dispatch a delegation to bring the desires and exigencies of their trade to the attention of their eminent visitor.

"We merchants," announced the head of the delegation, "feel ourselves fortunate to be able to greet you in our town as a guest. We have no doubt that if a happy fate had not sent you to America and you had remained here you would have been a successful and honored merchant. But fate had better things in store for you. Our occupation is a very honorable one, and we are all satisfied with our lot. What we lack here, however, is enough money to live on. Our financial status is not worthy of our position in the world, and we have placed high hopes on your generosity."

"Why not develop an industry here? Why not open a factory? The town will flourish. If you decide on a factory, the whole surrounding district will be able to live on it, for workers would come here then, and every worker would need shoes, clothing and food. In this way the whole town could live very handsomely off the workers. On the other hand, we have no industry, and we are in danger of becoming poorer and poorer and being reduced to becoming workers our-

selves. Who but you, a man who was nurtured in our midst and went forth to make his fortune in America—who but you could lend us a helping hand? Our town and all its merchants await your aid.”

“Thank you. I’ll do my best.”

This reply, given in English, was the only thing Brecht said to all the delegations and individuals who visited him.

“What did he say?” people asked each other as they left his house.

“Didn’t you understand? It was English. I didn’t understand, either, but I believe he said he agreed with us.”

Besides these petitioners, a great many young men visited him and asked if he could arrange for them to go to America and assure them of a position when they got there. To these visitors Brecht showed himself much more cordial. He related the story of his success and of the unlimited possibilities in America, and aroused high hopes in their breasts. The secret of success in America, he said, consisted in respecting the law and working hard.

Days of tension and expectation passed. Every one was waiting. The officials, the police, the militiamen, the government agents,—who always squeezed money out of strangers—deferred to the American gentleman. They did not force his hand, but waited until he should give them something of his own accord. The representatives of the charitable societies also

waited until he should examine them and give them money. The merchants' society busied itself developing a plan for industrializing the town, which it hoped to lay before the American for his approval. Many of the young people tried to get passports. In case they should prove successful in getting their papers, they were prepared to depart at once, and real-estate operators were already bidding for their houses and land, to sell them to the American after the young people had gone.

Brecht had hardly been in the town a week when one morning the news suddenly spread that he had left during the night and had already crossed the boundary. Wild excitement prevailed on all sides. Old and young rushed to his parents' house with the hope that the report might prove untrue. More than one hundred people gathered around the dwelling, but no one stirred within. The house was deserted, and no one knew where its occupants had gone. At length, after long waiting and much shouting, a neighbor explained that Brecht had received a telegram from New York during the night, announcing that his wife was seriously ill. For this reason he had started for home head over heels. He had, however, left word that as soon as his wife was restored to health he would come back and fulfill his plans. His parents had accompanied him as far as the border, and were likely to return again at any moment.

The narrator of this story was promptly surrounded,

and had to repeat it over and over again. The question on every one's tongue was, "When his wife is cured, will he come back again? Will he?"

Only rarely were so much as two words spoken in the shop, and if any one had tried to speak his voice would have been drowned by the noise of a hundred electric sewing machines that never stood still and by the din of the elevated railway that ran past the windows of the shop. Every one was occupied with his work. Only rarely did a pair of eyes glance at the hands of the clock.

I had been working in this shop for two weeks, and the five hours from the time I started in the morning until the half-hour pause at noon seemed endless. I was new at the job, and even at the end of two weeks I could not run my machine smoothly. For this reason I received very low wages. Most of the people around me were doing piecework. The time that seemed to me to pass so slowly flew by all too quickly to suit them.

Our tongues were loosened a little when the clock struck twelve. Every one got up, and the machines all stopped at once, as if checked by a single hand. We all stretched our limbs and walked about a little. This was the first sign in five hours that this depressing room contained living creatures as well as machines. Every one pressed out of the door. Some ran to a near-by lunchroom, and others devoured the food they

had brought with them, in the vestibule or in the near-by park. During this noonday pause we would exchange a few words with one another. In this way you made acquaintances that would ripen if you happened to be going in the same direction when the day's work was done.

Ever since the first day I had been in the shop I had noticed the face of my neighbor. It seemed to me I had seen that face at some other place and time. The question interested me more and more. During the noonday pause I tried to engage him in conversation, but my attempts failed. I invited him to have some of my lunch, but he refused. During the noonday pause he always stayed in the shop, and when work was done he disappeared—no one knew where.

"Where have I seen that smooth, careworn face before?" The question reverberated in my mind.

"Tell me, buddy," I turned to the man sitting beside me as we were riding home together on the Bronx express, "do you know the fellow with the smooth face who sits next me and who always stays in the shop at the lunch hour?"

"Sure I know him. We used to be neighbors. For many years we lived in the same house, and we have worked in five different shops together. He must have been in New York sixteen or seventeen years now. He has been married for more than ten years, and has two children. After many years of work he had saved twelve or fifteen hundred dollars. His wife thought

that they might use that money to buy a little business of their own.

"One day, it must have been two years ago, he came home and said he was going to Europe. To Europe? His wife looked at him dumbly, thinking he was joking, but he explained once more that he really was going to Europe. 'Every one goes to Europe; I want to go, too,' he explained. 'With these hard-earned dollars?' asked his wife. 'Sure. Do you think that most of the others who go there have much more money? I have spent my whole life toiling in the foul air of the shop, and at least I am entitled to a few weeks of life and pleasure.'

"All pleas were useless. He got himself a new suit and a gold watch-chain, and set out for his old home. He was only away a short time, but the journey over and back, the presents he took with him, and the time he had to spend without a job, when he returned, used up all his savings. He is now working as hard as ever, and is trying to do more piecework than any one else. He's worked himself sick, but won't take a single week's rest."

"Do you know what the man's name is?"

"Certainly I know. His name is Karl Brecht."

"Didn't he come from Bukowina, in what is now Rumania?"

"Sure, from Rumania. Why do you ask? . . . But here's my station. Good-bye."





